

Penhale Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116210
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	326346
Inspection date	27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	176
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 Peter Brokenshaw
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Larcombe
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lincoln Road Fratton Portsmouth PO1 5BG
Telephone number	02392 821016
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues in particular.

- The effectiveness of strategies to raise attainment in literacy, especially in writing.
- How well the school is working to ensure that girls' attainment matches that of boys.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that have suitable challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- How well middle managers check pupils' learning and progress in their subject areas.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Penhale is a smaller than average infant school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is smaller than average as is the proportion of those for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is greater than average; of these most have hearing impairment and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special education need is much higher than average. The school has a Hearing Impaired Resource that provides for children from all parts of the city. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Nursery class and two Reception classes. Nursery children attend either morning or afternoon sessions. The school holds Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Penhale is a good school where pupils make good progress because they are well taught and they enjoy their learning. Relationships at every level are good and pupils feel confident in the adults who care for them. One Year 2 pupil said, 'I like Penhale because it is a wonderful place, a really good school to learn in and be happy.' The vast majority of parents share similar positive views. One parent, typical of many, wrote, 'The school is excellent. All the staff are very professional, approachable and caring. I do not think my children could have had a better start to school life.'

Children enter both Nursery and Reception with levels of skills and knowledge that are below expectations at this age and make a good start to their learning. When they enter Year 1, most pupils' skills and knowledge are similar to that found nationally. Good progress is continued in Years 1 and 2. The good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, ensures they too make good progress from their individual starting points. At the end of Year 2, in 2008, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was average and above average in mathematics. However, in writing, higher-attaining pupils did not do as well as in reading and mathematics. In 2008, girls did not attain as well as boys, and this was at variance with previous years when girls did better than boys in reading and writing. The school has focused closely on addressing this recent change in girls' attainment. Leaders and teachers are looking carefully at what topics are of more interest to girls to provide more motivation and improve their progress. Girls spoke very enthusiastically, for example, of their study of Florence Nightingale. Although it is too soon to see the full impact of the school's work, the evidence indicates that it has begun to bear fruit.

The school has extended the range of strategies to help raise levels of attainment in writing since the last inspection. New initiatives are assessed to ensure they remain effective. More recently, the careful development of fine motor skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and regular practice of handwriting skills in Years 1 and 2 are showing signs of success in improving the physical aspects of writing. The stimulation of pupils' imagination through topic work has been another recent initiative. For example, pupils enjoyed the project 'how the body works', which linked literacy, science and their understanding of healthy living. In Year 2, booster classes for the more able pupils in literacy have been introduced recently and evidence in pupils' work and the school's own monitoring indicates they too are having a positive impact on improving literacy skills for the more able pupils. Early indications are that this combination of strategies is increasingly effective, with a greater proportion of pupils writing at or beyond expected levels.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to plan lessons that are interesting. Pupils are clear about what they are going to learn and enjoy reviewing all they have done at the end of lessons. They settle quickly to their work and are enthusiastic about learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the new marking policy is being used with increasing precision. Pupils are well known to staff and the progress they make in lessons is monitored carefully. However, assessment information is not used consistently well in all classes to plan tasks which meet the needs of all pupils and ensure they are fully challenged, especially the more able. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who need extra help with their learning. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and good opportunities are planned for pupils to develop ICT skills in lessons. A variety of learning experiences are planned for

pupils outside the classroom in a good range of clubs, visitors to the school, and the adventurous trips made by pupils in and around Portsmouth.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school and develop good social skills which help to make the school a happy and harmonious community. Attendance is satisfactory and closely monitored by the school to encourage improved attendance and punctuality. Pupils know that their ideas are valued and all classes have contributed good ideas to the school council about ways in which the playground could be improved. The 'friendship bench', also introduced at the request of the school council, is used well. The dedicated manner in which school councillors act as playground friends shows how well pupils care about the needs of others; it also demonstrates their mature sense of responsibility. Pupils are friendly and polite and behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand about being safe and have an extremely good understanding of how to stay healthy. The school's work in this area is reflected in the Activemark award. Pupils understand and respect the different faiths and lifestyles of others and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are good.

Pupils are well cared for and they are confident to seek help from adults in their school when they have problems. All aspects of pupils' personal development are well monitored, and safeguarding and safety measures are secure. Good links are used effectively by the school to support pupils, especially those with hearing impairment and other special educational needs. Parents too are kept closely involved with their children's progress. Good guidance is provided for them on aspects of the curriculum through a range of workshops to help them support their children at home. Academic guidance is good and improving. Pupils have targets set in literacy and they find these helpful. They believe that targets and the comments made by their teachers help them to improve their work. The satisfactory standards that pupils attain, the promotion of their good personal development and the enjoyment of learning that they are encouraged to develop help ensure that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development in its provision. She works in good partnership with the deputy headteacher and together they provide good leadership for a committed and enthusiastic team. Middle managers use assessment information with increasing skill. They are keen to promote improved standards in their subject areas and monitor both progress and teaching and learning well. Community cohesion is promoted well both in school and in the pupils' understanding of the world beyond school. For example, they regularly visit a local home for the elderly and entertain the residents. Pupils are provided with a broad range of experiences, including learning to sign to help ensure that pupils with impaired hearing are fully involved. Governors are closely involved with all aspects of the school and carefully review developments. They play an active part in the drive to promote further improvement and provide good support and challenge in equal measure. Leaders and managers ensure that good resources are used efficiently and the school provides good value for money. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed and although some are still working through the school their progress and effectiveness is kept under close review. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children settle quickly and enjoy learning because they are well cared for. Children's personal development is good. They are encouraged to share and care for each other and to become independent and confident. Children enter

Nursery and Reception with knowledge and skills that are below those expected of children of a similar age. In particular some children have well below-average language and social skills. Good teaching and carefully structured support ensure that all children make good progress, including those with hearing impairment. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged well by all staff because correct language is modelled well by adults. The use of phonics is well established and used to improve children's vocabulary and word recognition. The curriculum is well planned and activities within the classroom are stimulating and provide good challenge for all children. The secure outside area has very limited space, thus restricting access to only a few children at a time. Big toys, to extend children's motor skills, can as a result be used only when the main playground is not being used by Year 1 and 2 pupils. Despite the best efforts of staff, the outside learning environment does not provide sufficient opportunities to extend all areas of learning. Good links are built with parents, beginning with home visits. Parents are kept well informed about their children's development. Staff work as a dedicated team and leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share existing good practice to ensure that assessment information is used more effectively in planning tasks in lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the more able pupils.
- Extend the outdoor learning area for the Early Years Foundation Stage to enhance the learning experiences for children.

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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?	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?	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?	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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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	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?	2
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**

09 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penhale Infant School, Portsmouth, PO1 5BG

You may remember that two inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for making our visit so enjoyable. You were very friendly and helpful to us. We had a most interesting time talking to you and seeing all the good things that are happening in your school. You told us that you thought your school was good and we agree with you.

We saw that you behave well in lessons and play happily and sensibly together at playtimes. You enjoy your lessons and are making good progress. Everyone works hard to make sure that you are well cared for and safe in school. You have an excellent understanding of what you need to do to stay healthy. You are well taught and your teachers make your lessons enjoyable and interesting. Your school is well led and managed and that is why you enjoy learning and make good progress.

We have asked the school to do two things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that teachers share their skills to plan lessons with tasks that stretch all of you, especially those of you who find learning easier.
- Extend the outside play area for the Nursery and Reception children so that they have more space and opportunity to play and learn.

Yours faithfully

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector