

# Maple Grove Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135221
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	334457
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ronald Cohen

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>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	238
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>	Mr John Parr
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Geoffrey Allen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<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>	St Agnell's Lane Grove Hill Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 7BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 426310
<b>Fax number</b>	01442 426311

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Maple Grove Primary School is a new school in Hemel Hempstead for pupils aged 3 to 11 years, which opened in September 2008 following the merger of two smaller primary schools, Barncroft and Eastbrook. It is average in size, and is located on the former Eastbrook site. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average. A higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs is lower than average. The socio-economic profile of the pupils is below average, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at Nursery with below average attainment.

## 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 in which pupils make good progress.

The very high standard of pastoral care is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school, their sense of well-being, personal development and the good progress they make. Pupils feel safe in school and, if trouble happens, they have confidence in trusted adults. Pupils have a strong sense of community within and beyond the school. They behave well, know how to keep safe and healthy, and are well prepared for the future economic well-being. Given the nature of the school's population, attendance is good. The head teacher and senior leadership team have given the new school a new way to engage pupils through the rich and vibrant international primary curriculum, firmly focused on pupils' enjoying learning.

The school is still in its first year in existence, so it is impossible to determine the progress of different groups of pupils from one key stage to another. However, the very good tracking systems in the school monitor pupils' specific progress across this first year. Pupils enter the Nursery with skills which are below, or, in the case of speaking and listening, well below those expected at their age, and they reach nationally expected standards by the time they leave Reception. By the end of their respective years, pupils in Years 2 and 6 are also reaching national averages. Pupils reach higher standards in mathematics and science than in English, where, despite improvements, standards still lag behind. Nevertheless, in all years, the standards attained represent good progress given pupils' starting points. The school recognises that it must continue to sustain its efforts to raise standards, particularly in speaking, listening and writing.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons range from satisfactory to outstanding. Pupils mostly find them interesting and engaging and they respond positively to the realistic levels of challenge from their teachers. However, a small minority of lessons rely too heavily on teacher direction, without sufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for independent learning.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, with the support of his senior colleagues and the governors, has shown outstanding vision in his leadership and determination in taking decisive and successful action. His 'pre-conditioning work' in the year before the school opened, guaranteed that the school 'hit the ground running' at the beginning of its first year, and allowed it to promote pupils' progress effectively. His inspirational vision is shared by pupils, teachers and support staff. Parents, too, are overwhelmingly supportive. 'Maple Grove is focused on the holistic development of my children' is typical of their comments. Governance is good. Governors ask the right questions to ensure continued progress. The school gives good value for money and demonstrates good capacity for continued improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They enter school with skills and knowledge that are lower than would be expected of typical three- and four-year olds. Their English skills are especially low. Effective induction procedures, including home visits, ensure that parents are confident and children settle in quickly. Care and safeguarding of the children are excellent and they make good progress in all their areas of learning to reach broadly average expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Many make outstanding progress

in English because staff work especially hard to develop vocabulary and teach letter sounds. Progress in mathematics is slightly less good because some children who do not speak English as their mother tongue find the mathematical vocabulary hard to acquire. Children really enjoy the carefully thought out activities and learn through play very successfully, cooperating well. For example, they continued to develop their knowledge about animals through outdoor role play after a visit to Woburn. 'Don't let the animals out of their cages!' they said. Progress when children are working independently is occasionally slower, as they are not always given full explanations about what they might learn and how they might improve. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is an outstanding role model and works very hard to make sure that assessment is meticulous and informs future planning. She has done very well to develop the provision and outcomes to this level over the course of one year.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in the areas of speaking, listening and writing.
- Build on the best practice to improve teaching further by increasing pupils' opportunities for independent learning in all classes.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills which are below those normally expected at their age. They are particularly low in speaking and listening. At the end of the school's first year in existence, pupils are about to enter Year 1 with the skills generally expected at their age. This represents good progress. Close evaluation of the different groups of pupils including the progress seen in lessons as well as in tracking through their work books, shows that, at the end of both Years 2 and 6, current cohorts have met or surpassed their challenging targets, and pupils' standards are broadly average. However, there are differences in the subjects and standards in mathematics and science are higher than those in English. Nevertheless, this represents good progress when judged from pupils' starting points at entry. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their classmates because of the good support that they receive both inside and outside of class.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Relationships are a key factor in the success of this school and underpin the pupils' good personal development. All staff go that extra mile to ensure that learners feel comfortable, secure and safe. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that any instances are swiftly and effectively dealt with. Learners enjoy school, and work and play harmoniously together. They also experience well thought out opportunities to learn about other faiths such as a visit to the local Sikh temple. Overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance has improved and is good compared to similar schools. The school has done especially well to reduce the number of persistent absentees over the course of its first year. Pupils understand the importance of being healthy and benefit from well-planned physical education. Much work has been done to develop the new school council and its members are proud of its achievements, especially its contributions to resources and outdoor areas for their new school. The whole school contributes enthusiastically to the community through collecting for a wide variety of charities. Pupils lack confidence in speaking and listening and this is a barrier to their ability to communicate effectively. However, their good progress in basic skills overall and their ability

to use information communication technology effectively shows that pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall but ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The large majority of lessons seen were good. Teachers successfully create a good working environment and this gives rise to strong relationships and good learning. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers effectively share the objectives of the lesson with the class at the start. Pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Activities and tasks are generally well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are suitably challenged and their interest is maintained. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to learning. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that pupils are given time to engage in their own independent learning. In a minority of classes, however, such opportunities are not always available and then pupils' learning slows.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school has worked hard to develop its new curriculum, based on the International Primary Curriculum model. Leaders have already ensured that pupils make good progress in their basic skills and they rightly continue to develop links between areas to make more opportunities to teach English, mathematics and information and communication technology in other subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy this integrated approach and as a result were keen to learn of experiences of life on Mars and in the rainforest, to take just two examples of projects being undertaken. Personal development is a strength of the school because this work is very well planned using the national social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme. Pupils who have behaviour problems or who struggle with English are similarly very effectively supported through well planned interventions. Parents and pupils are grateful for the enrichment offered by visits and visitors and by a wide variety of clubs which includes sport and first aid.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The strong inclusion team ensure that pupils' pastoral care is excellent. The work of the learning mentor is notable in the very effective support she gives to pupils and to their families. For example, she attracts a very good take up for her 'listening ear' service. Family learning is also exemplary with parents taking great pride in the certificates they receive in assembly, showing their achievements in understanding how to support their children's learning. Pupils who sometimes find learning difficult receive good support because their work is regularly reviewed and parents are consulted often. Pupils feel safe because the required safeguarding procedures are all in place and they know that they can talk to their teacher or to the learning mentor if they have a problem. Longer-term targets, displayed on the wall, help pupils to understand what they have to do next in their work. Teachers have consistent systems for marking and ensuring that pupils know what they have to do to improve. They do not always, however, go back to make sure that the improvements have been accomplished.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The head teacher has set the pathway for the new school's success, and has already established a cohesive teaching and learning community. The staff follow his clear lead with enthusiasm. The structuring of the senior leadership team at the beginning of the current academic year is resulting in robust systems for both strategic planning and checking the effectiveness of the school's work. This has raised the quality of teaching and learning and improved pupils' enjoyment through an exciting and engaging curriculum. The tracking of pupils' progress against challenging targets is effective. These initiatives are making a clear difference. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. A particular area of strength is and the school's successful community cohesion strategy. The school is clear about its priorities to raise standards, by ensuring the best teaching practices throughout the school and giving greater emphasis to the promotion of pupils' skills in speaking, listening and writing. Governors support the school well and play an active and key role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and holding it to account for its performance.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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<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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	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**

26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maple Grove Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7BG

Thank you all for the lovely welcome you extended to us when we visited your school. We found you all to be very helpful and very friendly. We judge your school to be good, and some things are really great. For example the way you are looked after so well when you are in school. We enjoyed joining you during your lessons, reading your work and talking to you. We particularly enjoyed walking through your 'rain forest', and how you were preparing for life on Mars. We saw there some of the reasons why you like school so much. We believe that the first year of your new school has been a real success. That is of course due to the very hard work of the headteacher, and all the adults in the school.

But, we would like to compliment you, too, on the way you look after your school and produce the very good displays we saw around the corridors and in the classrooms. We also like the way you take responsibility in your contribution to the work of the school council and the way you help each other during playtimes and lunchtimes.

To make things even better, we have asked your head teacher to help you get higher marks in all your subjects but particularly in your speaking, listening and writing. We have also asked him to make sure that that all your lessons are as good as the very best ones, where you learn by doing things for yourselves.

We believe that these will make school even better than it is now. Of course, you can help by continuing to come to school every day and to do your best in class.

I wish you all well in the future.

Ronald Cohen

Lead inspector