

Ford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113270
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338132
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Bloodsworth
Headteacher	Chris Benson
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and some of the school's partners. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including development plans, governing body minutes, policies, external monitoring reports, security checks, risk assessments and pupil-tracking information. They also analysed 44 responses to parents' questionnaires, 17 from staff and 76 from pupils in Key Stage 2.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at the following:

- provision for, and the progress of, different groups, particularly more able pupils and boys and girls
- whether recent improvement in English, especially in writing, is being maintained
- the robustness of management systems such as self-evaluation and the way in which governors challenge school performance.

Information about the school

This is a small urban school with limited external play space. The proportion of pupils entering and leaving partway through their primary education is much higher than usual. Numbers are increasing, with the combined Nursery and Reception Early Years Foundation Stage forming a high proportion of the school roll. The proportion of pupils who have free school meals is much higher than average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high, with over 70% in some year groups. At the time of the inspection, several staff were new to the school, some covering absence, and governors had started the process of recruiting a successor for the current headteacher, who is due to retire early in 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It enjoys a high reputation in the local community as a place where pupils achieve well because staff care very much about each individual's development. Effective care, guidance and support are considerable strengths of the school. Pupils settle happily into a supportive, stimulating environment where they learn well. Staff help pupils to understand and overcome potential barriers to their learning which are often very complex, and many parents appreciate enormously the sensitive help provided for families. Pupils respond extremely well to the unified approach and high expectations, which are common across the school and to all staff and which provide a secure, stable framework for good academic progress and personal development.

Children's skills on entry are below, and now often considerably below, those expected nationally. In key areas related to language, social and emotional understanding, entry skills are very weak. Good provision during their Nursery and Reception years leads to children developing these skills rapidly. Even so, when they move into Year 1, about half are not ready to move on to the usual curriculum. The school therefore provides a well-modified extension of Early Years-style learning to ease this transition for those who need it, which helps them to catch up. Good progress continues because a successful early focus on teaching pupils how to learn and how to interact with other pupils and adults creates an atmosphere for learning throughout the school which is productive, harmonious and respectful.

The small number of pupils in each year group means that standards in Year 6 vary from year to year. However, many recent initiatives to improve areas such as writing are clearly starting to have a good impact, particularly in English, which improved from a very low base at the time of the last inspection to just above average in 2009. Standards in mathematics and science in Year 6 have remained average, but this also represents good achievement from pupils' low starting points. Achievement in subjects such as art is good and pupils enjoy the new approach to the curriculum, which connects subjects together in an interesting way. Links to themes such as science fiction and space in the current Year 4/5 motivate pupils more effectively towards writing, which many of them find difficult. The quality of writing is improving, but the school recognises that handwriting and presentation of pupils' written work are still particular weaknesses.

There is good progress because teaching is good. All staff are very skilled at recognising and fulfilling the needs of the large majority of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, who therefore make the most progress. The very small minority of more able pupils are sometimes not challenged enough in all phases of lessons, although they have recently been identified more accurately and are

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beginning to be stretched through visits and courses outside school. Teaching and non-teaching staff work very effectively as teams and high investment in support staff is a key factor in good provision and outcomes.

Successful leadership and management from the headteacher and senior staff have maintained the school's strong position from its last inspection. Governance is satisfactory and strengths are emerging, but governors acknowledge that they are not yet fully effective in helping to shape the school's strategic direction. The imminent recruitment of a new headteacher presents a timely opportunity to develop this role. With strong middle management and a deep commitment to improvement among staff, the school is well placed to sustain its progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the presentation of pupils' work, especially their writing, through:
 - consistently encouraging high-quality handwriting
 - introducing pen-writing earlier
 - reminding pupils about the importance of presentation in teachers' feedback and marking.
- Provide more challenge for more able pupils in all phases of lessons.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of governors in helping to shape strategic direction.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

It was clear from pupils' work and the lessons observed that their skills and understanding improve quickly because they enjoy being at Ford and feel safe, secure, happy and settled. Many who start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, or who join the school later, have previously experienced difficulties in and obstacles to learning which are successfully overcome during their time in the school. Most pupils develop good self-esteem and confidence because staff continually reaffirm their academic or personal successes. Finely tuned short- or longer-term interventions help pupils who present challenging behaviour to understand the impact of their actions, so that almost all conform well to the school's high expectations. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because of well-targeted combined help from teachers, support staff and external partners.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are confident and polite to the many visitors who come in to enrich their curricular experiences. Feedback from visits they make is equally positive. Pupils use such experiences well in lessons; for instance, in a Year 5/6 lesson led by a teaching assistant, they made good use of their learning from a recent visit to Tintagel. Other examples, such as enjoyable assemblies, also contribute well to good social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding, although pupils have limited experience of cultural diversity. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school and to their local community, through contributions to a mission for the homeless, for instance, as well as fundraising for the wider world. They understand

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what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and participate actively in many sports opportunities of all kinds, including dance and through their links with the local football club. Rich opportunities, such as visits to universities, help to raise pupils' and parents' aspirations for the future, a key objective for the school. By the time pupils leave, their ability to work in groups, teams and pairs, combined with satisfactory attendance, secure literacy and numeracy skills and good levels of competence with computers, provides a firm foundation for the next phase of their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching provides pupils with work that is well matched to almost all needs. It is marked helpfully with encouraging comments and suggestions for improvement, so pupils know what to do next. Oral comments between pupils and staff are noted, which makes pupils think about what staff have said, as well as what they have written. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and lessons are properly adapted to suit emerging needs. Most lessons show pupils working effectively in groups on differently pitched work and talking together sensibly and quietly about it. Sometimes they work in astutely matched

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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pairs where more able pupils help slower learners and thereby develop their own social skills, as in a Year 5/6 English lesson, on the theme of the Knights of the Round Table. Interesting techniques, such as the use of puppets to extend more able pupils' use of language in a Year 1/2 lesson, provide useful extension work. However, there are not enough such challenges, even where teaching is otherwise good, to enable this minority to reach their full potential.

Some areas of care, guidance and support are outstanding; these are aspects on which parents comment most appreciatively. Support for vulnerable pupils, for instance, is excellent, and several parents who have moved their children to this school from elsewhere pay particular tribute to the positive impact the school has made on their children's lives.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior staff have succeeded well in their drive and determination to maintain and develop the school's position from its last inspection, when it had already shown considerable improvement. This has been challenging, as standards on entry have declined; pupils have come and gone, frequently after making considerable progress while they were at the school, with newcomers often transferring here because they have existing difficulties. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all and staff are determined to resolve their acknowledged concern about the small number of more able pupils. Staff have maintained an extremely cohesive school community, where all share the same values and objectives in a friendly, harmonious environment. All staff are good at listening to pupils, parents and others, and feed the information they gather into their monitoring and evaluation very effectively. As a result, the curriculum has been invigorated so that pupils now really look forward to their lessons. Planning has been reviewed and revised to include more effective support and guidance and more interesting projects. Safeguarding procedures are good so pupils feel very secure. Community cohesion is promoted well at the local level and the school is beginning to expand these horizons to the national and international levels. Although it has the intermediate International School Award, the school recognises that these are areas for future development. Partnerships with outside agencies, such as community police and the local supermarket, are good, as are those with parents. A useful school website, to which pupils themselves contribute provides good information. School

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resources, particularly the staff and its limited external space, are used and managed well to achieve good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursery and Reception groups get off to a good start, including those who are identified early with special educational needs and/or difficulties. Good personal and social development comes about as children learn to play well together, take turns and help each other, making helpful comments about what others are doing. They take responsibility for small tasks, such as putting away toys and putting on their coats. Relationships with adults are good so children quickly learn to adopt good standards of behaviour. Effective partnerships with parents help children settle quickly so that all work and play happily, both independently and together.

Staff provide a good range of activities inside and outdoors, using a wide variety of different teaching methods. Resources are good, providing a well-equipped, stimulating learning environment. Adults know children well, incorporating into their planning factors related to their backgrounds and needs. Good organisation ensures that activities are based effectively on accurate, meticulously recorded observations and assessments, and that tasks are suitably challenging. Good leadership and management, well-deployed staff and resources, and a common sense of purpose ensure that all groups of children make good progress. The outdoor environment, while good, does not include the same stimulating visual and tactile references to each area of learning as are found indoors.

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Adults are highly sensitive to children's welfare and make sure they are safe. Self-evaluation is effective in identifying strengths and areas for development, often using good partnerships with outside agencies, such as help from the parent support worker. Teachers, support staff and volunteers all work together effectively to ensure that children make good progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are very pleased with the school's provision and with the academic and personal outcomes for their children. They appreciate the richness of the opportunities provided, and the warm welcome they and their children get from all staff in the school. Several parents commended the impact of the good care, guidance and support their children receive. A number who have moved children from other schools, for various reasons, comment in particular on the very positive difference they feel the move has made. A small minority of parents express concerns about the school's management of challenging behaviour. The inspection team explored this but found that behaviour in general is good. Pupils also report that, generally, when some pupils break rules, the school's sanctions work. The school acknowledges, however, that when infringements occur because individuals are extremely troubled and not because of what happens in school, help and support to improve unacceptable behaviour take longer to have an impact, and that they need to explain these instances more effectively to parents. Other comments included requests for more homework and the lack of sports facilities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ford Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 163 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	64	15	34	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	67	15	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	57	18	41	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	57	15	34	1	2	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	26	59	13	29	2	4	2	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	57	13	30	3	7	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	45	19	43	2	4	2	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	45	16	36	3	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	55	17	39	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	43	14	31	7	16	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	48	18	41	3	7	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	25	57	17	39	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	68	10	23	3	7	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



05 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ford Primary School, Plymouth, PL2 1PU

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school when we came for the inspection. We enjoyed being there very much and were pleased to visit your lessons, to look at some of your work and to talk to several of you. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Yours is a good school where you progress well in your personal development and in your class work. All the adults in the school keep you safe and make sure you are doing well. We were very pleased to see how much you enjoy your lessons now that there are interesting links between subjects and your parents tell us that you really love learning. We were impressed by your good behaviour and how friendly you are to visitors, including us. The visits you make to interesting places really help your learning and give you lots to talk and write about. Writing was one of the things we looked at in particular and we found you have improved the content and the length of your written work. We feel that the presentation of your writing could be better still, though, so we have asked the school to improve that. This will need your help, in trying to make handwriting neat, writing in pen earlier and taking notice when teachers tell you how your presentation could be better.

Another thing we looked at was whether pupils who learn quickly are progressing as well as the rest of you. We found that they could sometimes be doing harder work in lessons so we have asked your teachers to provide that. We found that boys and girls do as well as each other, and that you all get on very well together.

We found that the people who run the school do a good job and that they are trying to make the school even better. You know some of the governors and we have asked all of them to get more involved with how things are to improve, so you may get to know more governors in future.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms

Lead inspector

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