

Plaistow Hill Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113295
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338138
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	W Grantham
Headteacher	Fiona Hazeel
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw twelve lessons and eight teachers and held meetings with parents, governors, pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, documents, assessments and records, including 56 parental questionnaires.

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

- the school's assessments of pupils over time to clarify the trends in attainment
- whether increased monitoring has improved teaching
- the quality of temporary leadership and management arrangements
- whether the governing body challenges the school adequately.

Information about the school

Plaistow Hill Infants' School has few pupils from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average and the largest group of these pupils has specific learning difficulties. For much of the period since the previous inspection, the school had an acting headteacher and temporary leadership arrangements. The acting headteacher was appointed as permanent headteacher in September 2009.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Plaistow Hill Infants' School provides a satisfactory education. Pupils enjoy school as it provides them with interesting opportunities to learn and develop in a safe environment. Parents and carers are highly supportive and all who returned questionnaires were happy with their child's experience of the school. One typical response was, 'My child is always very happy to go to school and he is making good progress with the support of his teachers.'

The school has strengths in its care for pupils. All adults know pupils well and are very attentive to their concerns. Good behaviour and constructive relationships help to give the school a pleasant ethos. The curriculum is well adapted to pupils' needs, is interesting and informative and stimulates pupils to work hard. However, it does not do enough to promote pupils' understanding of people from other cultures and backgrounds.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a sound preparation for pupils' subsequent education. Pupils enter Year 1 and leave Year 2 with average attainment. This represents satisfactory progress. Consistently good support for those with specific learning difficulties ensures that this group, and others facing difficulties, make similar progress to their peers. Achievement for all pupils is satisfactory with no significant variations between subjects. The school council gives pupils a chance to make their views known and has led to some changes. For example, pupils named the classes after sea creatures in ascending size, according to age. However, pupils take very few responsibilities around the school. There are appropriate links with the local community, including singing to the residents of local care homes.

Teaching does not always promote good learning. Some lessons are lively and very interesting but others do not challenge pupils well enough or give them sufficient opportunities to work independently. A number of pupils told inspectors that their work was too easy. Inconsistencies in teaching are holding the school back from meeting its aim of driving up attainment. The assessment of pupils' work has improved recently and helps identify where pupils may be lagging behind, but the information is not always fully employed to sharpen up teachers' methods.

Between the time of the previous inspection and September 2009, the leadership of the school was on a temporary basis. This reduced the capacity of leadership and management to accelerate the pace of improvement. With the headship now on a permanent footing, arrangements for checking the school's effectiveness are improving. Regular monitoring and assessments are now integrated into its activities. These provide broadly accurate information, but subsequent actions have not had a significant impact

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on pupils' attainment and progress. Governors are developing a clearer picture of the school's characteristics but do not have enough detailed knowledge to offer strong challenge. Leaders and managers are now driving improvement and embedding ambition more successfully. Development plans are relevant and precise. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By summer 2011, raise attainment and progress by:
 - using monitoring rigorously to develop consistently effective teaching that challenges all pupils
 - using assessment to track pupils' progress in greater detail, identify weaknesses and remedy them.
- By January 2011, ensure governors check up on the school systematically and use this information to provide an effective challenge to school leaders.
- By January 2011, develop links with schools and groups in contrasting environments and promote a better understanding of life in a multi-cultural country and world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils start Year 1 with attainment that is close to average. Strong teaching and an interesting, well-adapted curriculum in Year 1 enable them to settle quickly into Key Stage 1. Pupils demonstrate good learning routines, inherited from their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In a highly engaging and well-focused Year 1 lesson, pupils made excellent progress as they discussed and wrote about a recent exciting trip to the aquarium. Nevertheless, the inconsistent focus on learning in lessons means that progress in classrooms across Years 1 and 2 is variable but only satisfactory overall. In a less effective Year 2 session, where pupils investigated whether various sandwiches gave good value for money, they had too few opportunities to investigate independently and the more able pupils did not find the activity sufficiently challenging.

All adults understand how to support pupils with specific learning and other difficulties. Such effective provision means that these pupils also make satisfactory progress. Given their starting points, the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory.

Pupils' good behaviour contributes to their progress. The new behaviour policy is starting to have a positive impact and most adults manage any challenges to the good order of the school effectively. Pupils enjoy school and relate warmly to one another and to staff. They feel safe in school and on the playground because adults always keep a close eye on them. Pupils report that any fractious behaviours or falling out between friends are firmly dealt with.

Healthy food is always available for snacks and at lunchtime and pupils understand the importance of eating fruit and drinking enough in hot weather. They know they should wear sun hats and take advantage of shade on hot summer days and appreciate the opportunities the school gives them for exercise, particularly swimming. The school

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provides some opportunities for pupils to develop skills useful to their future economic well-being, for example 'money' was the theme of many lessons in Year 2. Their progress in this area is satisfactory. Attendance is similar to the national average. Pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and their social development is good as they grow in self-assurance and benefit from numerous occasions when they work and play together. Limited opportunities to engage with pupils from different cultures and contrasting environments mean that pupils have too little understanding or interest in the culture of others from different backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

The school has developed an interesting curriculum that both meets pupils' needs and engages with pupils effectively. Subjects are combined in interesting topics, like 'money', promoting learning on a broad front. Numerous relevant educational visits, such as one to a local aquarium, provide good opportunities to promote speaking, listening and writing skills. The curriculum in Year 1 has been adapted well to smooth the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage in to more formal learning. A number of visitors

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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enhance pupils' daily learning diet. After-school clubs provide good additional experiences for pupils and are greatly over-subscribed.

Teaching has strengths, but is inconsistent and does not capitalise on the benefits of the curriculum. Highlights include careful planning and warm classroom relationships. Usually, these promote constructive behaviour. Teaching assistants work effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties. The best lessons are brisk and demanding, with perceptive questioning to check on, and deepen, pupils' understanding.

However, too many lessons fail to challenge pupils equally, so that the more able are not always kept at full stretch. Teachers sometimes talk for too long and do not give enough opportunities for pupils to work together or independently. Talkative pupils are not always effectively quietened, so the pace of lessons suffers. Where teachers use plans prepared by colleagues, their teaching tends to be less committed and effective. The school has good systems to assess pupils' progress. Marking is starting, although inconsistently, to provide advice for pupils about their next steps. Assessment data are accurate and indicate pupils' pattern of attainment over time, but do not clearly indicate how the progress being made compares with what is expected. Nevertheless, interventions to support those who are not doing as well as expected are having a good impact on achievement.

Parents are very positive about the nurture their children receive. The variety of targeted support offered to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is based on a good understanding of each pupil's needs and ensures good equality of opportunity for this group. Outside agencies provide additional help to vulnerable pupils and their families. Towards the end of the academic year, 'moving up morning' provides all pupils with good guidance and boosts their confidence about the changes that lie ahead. Older pupils visit Year 3 in the partner junior school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Regular monitoring of lessons provides the school with a clear picture of the quality of teaching. However, follow-up on areas of concern is not rigorous enough so, while the school is aware of weaknesses, these are not firmly addressed. In consequence, teaching remains satisfactory. The school now holds good information on pupils' attainment as it develops. It uses this data to assist individual teachers to boost the progress of each pupil. Again, a lack of rigour in following up on this process means that

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the impact of this good work is not as powerful as expected.

Staff are being increasingly involved in sharing the leaders' ambitions and in the school's planning for the future. The latter identifies correct priorities and clearly outlines the best way of addressing them. Strong provision to assist disadvantaged pupils ensures satisfactory equality of opportunity for all and no discrimination.

The governing body is becoming better organised to independently check on the school's work. Governors are visible around the school, understand what they should do to improve and ask pertinent questions. They are involved in developing future plans but do not always have enough understanding of pupils' progress to provide rigorous challenges. Governors have good systems to ensure that pupils are safe at school and regularly review the school's safeguarding work. Provision for safeguarding is satisfactory with secure procedures in areas such as child protection. Pupils are encouraged to be careful, for example by washing their hands before eating. The site is generally safe but would benefit from closer monitoring for risks at the start of each day.

Parental links are strong. Parents report they find the school approachable and open and questionnaires provide regular opportunities to air their views. They are kept well informed by weekly newsletters and numerous formal and informal opportunities to meet staff. A children and parent reading group has improved both pupils' and parents' skills in this area. An improved partnership with the nearby junior school has led to more realistic end of Key Stage 1 assessments and has improved transition arrangements. The 'excellence cluster' brings local schools together and enables them to share expert support. The school also judiciously uses some other additional expertise to support pupils facing barriers to development.

The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion, recognising its strengths in the links it has with the local area. It is aware of the need to broaden pupils' horizons by linking with contrasting environments within the United Kingdom and internationally, but has yet to act decisively to rectify the areas it has identified for improvement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are happy and self-assured learners in the caring environment provided by both the Nursery and Reception classes. The groups in each age range are very different in composition but, in both the Nursery and Reception classes, children reach the expected skills and aptitudes by the time they leave, although a little lower than average in communication, language and literacy. Given their lower than expected starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are confident and experienced, able to work both independently and collaboratively.

Across the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work well in planning a good mix of adult-directed and child-initiated activities with an appropriate emphasis on outdoor learning. Adults support learning with good questioning and warm interactions with children. Classrooms are bright, well organised and provide good stimuli for children to learn. Frequent assessments give a pleasing picture of the development of the 'whole child', but they are not focused sharply enough on identifying small steps in children's progress in each area of learning. As a result they have too little influence on teachers' planning.

All staff work effectively as a team and are well deployed, leading to consistent provision. Good resources are fully used to promote progress and children are well cared for. Parents are welcomed by staff and appreciate the nurturing, open atmosphere. The temporary leadership arrangements, where the headteacher has an over-arching leadership role, are not ideal, but do allow the Early Years Foundation Stage to function smoothly day-to-day. The headteacher's other responsibilities limit opportunities for monitoring the quality of provision.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

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The overwhelming majority of parents have nothing but praise for the school and eleven of the thirteen questions in the parental questionnaire had a fully positive response. A very small minority had concerns over how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team found no significant evidence to support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Plaistow Hill Infants' 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 216 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	73	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	82	10	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	79	12	21	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	71	16	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	79	12	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	75	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	66	18	32	1	2	0	0
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)	40	71	15	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	71	15	27	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	66	16	29	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	64	19	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	71	16	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	84	9	16	0	0	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plaistow Hill Infants' School, Plymouth PL5 2DT

Thank you for your help during our recent visit to your school. The inspectors enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We were pleased to hear how you enjoy school and were impressed with your good behaviour. Well done! I hope you can keep it up.

Your school provides a satisfactory education. It cares for you well and provides an interesting mixture of activities for you to take part in. Teaching is satisfactory, but sometimes lessons do not give you enough to do as some of you mentioned to us. Your progress is satisfactory. By the time you are ready to leave Year 2 you are doing as well as most other boys and girls around the country.

We have asked the school to improve these areas.

- Keep a close check on how well you are learning and help you all to make faster progress.
- Help the governors to check up more thoroughly on the school, especially your progress, so they can challenge and support it better.
- Link up with some schools in different areas in this country and abroad to develop your understanding of the wider world.

Once again, thanks for all your help.

It was good to meet you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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