

# Portfields Combined School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131718
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	354522
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barnard Payne

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	568
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Tyler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary St -Amour
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 May 2010
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They saw 20 teachers and 22 lessons. Inspectors also held meetings with a group of pupils, and governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a sample of pupils' books, the school development plan, the school's data showing pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, a selection of school policies and 172 parental questionnaires. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- current progress in English by all groups of pupils
- the progress made by pupils of different abilities and pupils whose first language is not English
- the impact of partnerships on pupils' learning and well-being
- the ways in which the school has promoted, planned-for and evaluated community cohesion.

## Information about the school

Most pupils attending this large primary school are from White British backgrounds. There are 17% of pupils from a variety of other ethnic groups and a large majority of these speak English as an additional language, with a small minority at an early stage of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average compared to other schools; most of this group have moderate learning difficulties that include difficulties with language and literacy. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The school has achieved the Active Mark award and Healthy School status.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school that meets the needs of all groups of pupils exceptionally well. Attainment is high and pupils make outstanding progress due to very effective teaching. Both pupils and parents have a high regard for the school. One parent rightly said, 'The school is excellent and offers a fantastic range of opportunities for children.' These include French and a variety of creative and sports activities.

Children start school with an average range of skills and abilities. They make outstanding progress in Reception and sustain this throughout the school. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is high. Pupils go on to achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. They reach such high standards because they develop very positive attitudes and high personal aspirations, due to the consistently high expectations of staff. Pupils' attainment and progress represent outstanding achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because the school has the right strategies in place to support and guide them. Those who join the school with English as an additional language receive targeted support that leads to this group rapidly acquiring skills to reach the same standards as their peers by the time they leave.

Pupils feel very safe in the school because secure safeguarding systems are in place. They have an excellent understanding of how to eat and live healthily. They make an outstanding contribution to the school community by taking on a variety of responsibilities to support one another. Pupils' high levels of literacy and numeracy make a significant contribution to their development of workplace skills to contribute to their future economic well-being; these include acquiring a high degree of capability with information and communication technology. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding; pupils show a high level of reflection and empathy.

The school's senior leadership has embedded a powerful sense of ambition across the school. The school has an excellent track record of high standards and has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. Senior leaders work effectively with an extremely committed staff to create a school that one parent says 'operates like a well-oiled machine'. Governance is good but not yet outstanding. This is because systems to collate and use the views of parents and pupils to set strategic priorities for development, and to evaluate the impact of governors' decisions on the school's day-to-day work, are not fully developed.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

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

- Develop the role of governors by:
  - making more systematic use of the views of parents and carers to inform decision-making
  - establishing robust systems to evaluate the impact of governors' decisions on the day-to-day work of the school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Attainment in English, mathematics and science has been consistently high for many years. The school accurately identified pupils' progress in writing as less strong than in mathematics and science in recent years and put into place strategies that have led to excellent progress in writing by all groups. Many pupils who find writing more challenging go on to achieve the level expected for their age. The more able pupils also make exceptional progress, showing a highly developed understanding of language. The picture is similar in mathematics, where many pupils who find the work more difficult still achieve at the levels expected for their age; and the more able pupils work at a very high level, showing evidence of a sophisticated understanding of mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards their work and each other and are very mature and responsible. They greatly enjoy school because lessons are engaging and stimulating. They particularly like the range of sporting activities, which also keeps them fit and active. They have exceptionally clear views about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how a balanced diet is an important aspect in maintaining health and well-being. They are very confident that adults respond positively to any concerns or worries they might have. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to play an active part in running the school and Year 6 pupils act as lunchtime helpers and play leaders. Pupils take part in a wide range of creative activities, but their understanding of different cultures is a less well-developed part of their cultural development. Pupils' attendance is above average.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>1</b>
	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is highly effective in engaging pupils. In questionnaires, all pupils felt that they learned a lot in lessons. This is a direct result of teaching that is sharply focused to ensure progress, particularly in acquiring and developing pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers carefully structure lessons and provide strategies that enable all groups to do well. In a lower set English lesson, pupils made outstanding progress because the teacher set clear targets and time limits to ensure a brisk pace and made very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers use ICT effectively in a variety of contexts. In another lesson, pupils used Excel to input data and make calculations; the teachers' high aspirations included expecting pupils to work out formulae independently and this enabled pupils to apply and extend their mathematical knowledge. Teachers make good use of assessment to give pupils guidance on how to improve their work. Support staff work closely with teachers to ensure all pupils feel happy and well equipped to tackle their work.

The school's curriculum provides a rich and varied range of experiences. During the inspection, there was a continual sound of pupils playing music; they greatly enjoy singing together and many take part in physical activities after school. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are taught French by specialists, supported by a French assistant. The school's investment in a virtual learning environment shows an innovative approach to planning pupils' future learning. Programmes for different groups are very well tailored to meet their needs, which is why all groups of pupils achieve outstanding outcomes. The school has established excellent systems for the care, guidance and support of pupils, and pupils contribute to these systems. For example, they eagerly learn sign language to ensure that those with a hearing impairment are understood and included.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>1</b>
	1

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leadership has created a school with a very strong drive and sense of purpose. Staff and pupils share high aspirations and a belief in success. Senior leaders know the school very well and ensure all staff are able to contribute to the school's self-evaluation and development planning. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding because the school makes highly effective use of its resources. Senior leaders are quick to pick up any areas for improvement and to act decisively. Strongly-shared expectations have led to a high degree of consistency in the quality of provision across the school. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, provide good support and have improved their working methods since the previous inspection. The school has established an excellent reputation and is highly valued by parents and carers. However, they do not play a significant role in decision making, which is why engagement with parents and carers is good rather than outstanding. The school works very effectively with a range of partners to promote pupils' learning and well-being. These include a partnership with local schools, involving staff in action research to develop their practice. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and this is reflected in the performance and experience of different groups of pupils across the school. The school adopts all recommended good practice to ensure effective safeguarding of pupils. The reason this aspect is good rather than outstanding is that not all governors have undergone safeguarding training. The school is well set to develop its work on community cohesion; it has a good policy in place, but this aspect is identified for future development so the full impact of the policy is not yet clear.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make excellent progress and achieve extremely well. Their independence and confidence flourish. Staff are highly skilled at questioning to encourage children to think and share their ideas. There is a calm, purposeful and happy atmosphere, with lots of praise. Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding and these, combined with the excellent support they receive, have a highly positive impact on what children do and learn. Learning diaries show the significant involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and the impact this has on their progress and achievement. They are taught key skills systematically and have very good opportunities to apply these in a variety of situations. There is a high level of consistency across the Early Years Foundation Stage, which means that children have an excellent range of activities to choose from. Rigorous assessment enables staff to match the tasks and resources to children's needs. All areas are very attractive and have an underlying structure to enable children to access learning opportunities easily. There is an excellently integrated curriculum with outstanding management. Children's well-being is significantly enhanced by the exceptional organisation.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires show that parents and carers think highly of the school. Almost all feel the school keeps their children safe, helps their children to make enough progress and that teaching is good. Other aspects receive positive responses from a very large majority. A few would like the school to help them more to support their child's learning and to take more account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' very positive comments and have also recommended that governors make more use of their views in decision-making in the school.



### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Portfields Combined 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	52	76	44	4	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	121	70	46	27	3	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	79	46	86	50	7	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	98	57	67	39	0	0	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	108	63	61	35	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	84	49	76	44	9	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	44	85	49	9	5	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)	73	42	85	49	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	76	44	87	51	2	1	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	33	92	53	6	3	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	38	86	50	9	5	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	101	59	65	38	2	1	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	103	60	65	38	3	2	1	1

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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



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