

Plantation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104441
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	324047
Inspection date	29 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	583
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Shankland
Headteacher	Mr Mike Storey
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hollies Road Halewood Liverpool Merseyside L26 0TH
Telephone number	0151 487 5678
Fax number	0151 488 6500

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the impact of leadership and management on raising standards in mathematics and writing in Key Stages 1 and 2. Evidence was gathered from: observations; assessment data; records and documents, including the school's self-evaluation; parents' replies to the questionnaires; discussions with staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Plantation School is much larger than average. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds but overall their circumstances are average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Pupils are mostly of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is average, though there is an increasing trend in the proportion of these pupils in the school. Due to local school reorganisation and rationalisation, the number of pupils joining the school after the normal age of admission is high. The school holds an Eco Schools Award for environmental projects, an Activemark for its work to promote sport and a Healthy Schools Award for its work to encourage healthy lifestyles. It was recently awarded an Artsmark Gold for developing pupils' creative skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Plantation Primary is a good school. Some features of the school's work are outstanding, including the leadership and management, the care given to pupils and pupils' personal development and well-being. Strong and decisive action by school leaders has brought about exceptional improvements to the curriculum along with rapid improvements in standards, particularly in the last year. School leaders acknowledge that there has not been sufficient time for the full impact of their work to be seen in national test and assessment results. However, provisional results for 2008 show a distinct increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in writing in Year 2 and Level 5 in mathematics in Year 6.

Achievement is good. Children arrive in Nursery with skills that are generally below those expected for their age. Much improved provision in the EYFS is leading to higher standards of literacy now seen when children leave the Reception class. Current standards in Year 2 are above average. Teachers' accurate assessments show that increasing numbers of pupils are reaching the higher than average levels expected for their age. Standards are also above average in Year 6 in English, science and mathematics. Achievement in English and science is particularly good with a high percentage of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age. Provisional results in the 2008 national tests show that in mathematics achievement is good, though standards are a little lower than in English, due partly to a number of pupils who started with below average mathematics skills and found mathematics particularly difficult. Comprehensive assessments show good and improving progress across current Years 3 to 6. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well from their starting points and often exceed their personal targets.

The school provides good value for money. Parents have very positive views of the school's work and the exceptionally good care it provides. One typical parental comment described it as a place where 'children grow in self-esteem and become very mature'. Parents praise the 'dedicated and approachable' teachers and the wide range of activities on offer. Pupils are valued and cared for in this school, which promotes their personal and social development exceptionally well. A strong sense of pride and exceptionally good, trusting relationships are shared between adults and pupils, giving it a very good local reputation. Parents are active partners in their children's education; their positive relationship with the school greatly enhances their children's learning.

Pupils learn well because teaching is good, with an increase in the frequency of good and better teaching since the last inspection. The school's high number of male teachers provides good role models for boys, thus promoting their good learning. Pupils' work is assessed accurately and tasks are planned carefully to meet their differing abilities. Special tuition groups help pupils who find learning difficult to achieve at least as well as other pupils. This acts as a dependable safety net, a major factor underpinning the above average standards. Higher ability pupils often have additional challenge, which has led to some success, but there are still some occasions, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 2, when they could be stretched a little further to promote higher standards. Well trained teaching assistants guide and encourage pupils, enabling all to succeed. Some expert teaching of French, music, and information and communication technology (ICT) leads to work of a very good standard. Teachers set pupils challenging personal targets. Helpful comments in marking clearly indicate what needs improving. Across the subjects, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and develop their own goals, thus helping them to acquire good independent learning skills. Pupils relish the rich

learning opportunities provided by an exceptionally well-balanced curriculum in which they rapidly develop their creative, practical and academic skills. Visits and expert visitors enrich and inject excitement into learning. Key Stage 2 pupils especially value residential visits to an outdoor education centre. Links with other schools and agencies provide great enhancement for pupils' learning. For example, pupils benefit from coaching in a wide range of physical activities and many specialists support sport, music, drama and dance programmes. This leads to very good learning in physical and creative work and the performing arts, reflected in the Artsmark Gold. Most pupils have good attendance, showing their great enjoyment of school. However, attendance is average overall because a small number of pupils, including some who have transferred from other schools, have poor attendance. School leaders take good action to encourage better attendance, as seen in recent improvements in attendance. Punctuality is good.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, supported extremely well by an extensive programme of personal education that rewards positive behaviour and attitudes. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, friendly and courteous. Meticulous attention is given to pastoral support. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. As a result, pupils feel secure, saying that adults in school are always on hand to listen and help. Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy living and responsible attitudes towards their personal well-being. They speak with pride of their opportunities to show that they are responsible citizens who give something back to the community. For example, Year 6 pupils organise their own fundraising activities as part of an enterprise scheme. In addition, the elected school council members represent pupils' interests well, for example, forming a health and safety committee to check on hazards around the school and contributing fresh ideas to improve the provision of healthy snacks and drinking water. Such opportunities, together with a good level of basic skills, ensure that pupils are extremely well prepared for their future lives and that the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior managers have implemented extremely effective systems to monitor the school's work. They have coped admirably with the influx of pupils from other schools, accelerating the pace of learning for all pupils despite this challenge. Improving standards show that the challenging targets senior managers set for the school's performance are being used very effectively to raise achievement. Self-evaluation is very thorough, providing staff and governors with a clear picture of how well the school is doing and of the strong impact of leaders' actions on standards. The school has come through a period of change exceptionally well; a restructured leadership team has set challenging expectations for teaching and learning and built in robust checks on provision. Teamwork is very strong and everyone is committed to achieving high standards. Leadership staff are employed exceptionally well to take the best possible advantage of their professional skills. Governors underpin the leadership and management of the school very well. They keep a critical eye on provision and achievement and are very actively involved in steering the school forwards. All this has resulted in a rapid recent improvement in standards and indicates the school's outstanding capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The EYFS is led exceptionally well. A thorough review of provision resulted in significant changes to the organisation and management of the EYFS, promoting very good improvement since

the last inspection, particularly in teaching and learning and in the levels of skills children reach. Many children start the Nursery class with lower than expected skills for their age across all areas of their learning. Relationships between staff and parents are good and children settle readily in the Nursery class. The exceptionally good care and attention paid to their learning needs has a significant impact on children's personal and social development. This, in turn, enriches their learning in the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and counting. Activities are well organised and, while children have a large element of free choice to develop their independence, all activities are carefully planned to accelerate children's learning. Teaching is outstanding, with all adults focusing on encouraging children to talk and to work and play together. Thorough and accurate assessments of last year's cohort of children confirm that all of them made good or better progress, leading to a high proportion of them reaching the early learning goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year. The value added to children's learning in the essential skills of communication and literacy is exceptionally good, giving them a secure foundation for the further improvement of their reading and writing skills in Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils of higher ability in Key Stage 2 are always given work in mathematics that is sufficiently demanding so that they achieve as well as they can.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
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	1
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**

I really enjoyed my inspection of your school to find out how good it is. Everyone was so friendly and helpful that it made my job much easier. Thank you for making me feel very welcome. You were right to say that your school is like a family: I felt as if I was part of it even after just one day! You showed me how well you all get along in the way that you look after each other and help each other to learn. I particularly enjoyed chatting with the school council and finding out how grown up they are in sharing their ideas about helping your school to get better.

I agree with the teachers and your parents when they say that your school is a good one. Your teachers were right to tell me that some things are excellent. They told me that they enjoy teaching you because you behave exceptionally well and have great fun learning. I could see very clearly that you enjoy being at school because lessons are fun and your teachers help you to be good learners. You also feel safe and well cared for and know what to do to live healthy lifestyles. You make good progress and achieve well. The standards you reach are above average by the time you leave Year 6 because teaching is good. All the staff work hard for you and try to make the school as good as it can be. Your teachers, for example, take you on exciting residential trips and provide a great range of after-school clubs. They set you good targets to help you to improve your work. I was impressed with how well you know these targets and what you need to do to reach them.

Your teachers are already working very hard to help you improve your work. I have asked your teachers to make sure that those pupils who learn quickly, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 2, are always given work that really makes them think so they can do even better.

I send you my best wishes. I hope that you will continue to enjoy learning and always try your best throughout your time at Plantation School and beyond.