

Portswood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116101
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	290419
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Pete Hutchings
Headteacher	Mrs Llyn Codling
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2001
School address	Somerset Road Southampton SO17 3AA
Telephone number	023 8055 5885
Fax number	023 8058 5228

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Portswood is a very popular, large primary school. Pupils come from very wide ranging social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Overall, their social circumstances and levels of deprivation are average. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. White British pupils make up the largest single group who attend the school, although a considerable proportion of pupils are from Asian heritages. Close to half of all pupils speak English in addition to another language. Since the last inspection, when the school was found to be very successful, the school became a Beacon School and has gained several awards including: Artsmark Gold, Investors in People, Activemark and a national award for supporting gifted and talented pupils (NACE). The school is awaiting accreditation for the 'Healthy Schools' award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Portswood is an outstanding, forward thinking, school where pupils achieve exceptionally well. The school's aim of developing pupils' 'Pride, passion and success' is fully met. As the headteacher says, 'Pupils gain a thirst for learning and care about the world around them.' Pupils leave this school with the skills, confidence and attitudes for success in their future lives. The school provides very well for pupils of all abilities, needs and backgrounds. This includes those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties.

Outstanding leadership, especially by the headteacher, together with senior staff and governors, is a major factor in pupils' outstanding achievement. The excellent relationships, exemplary care and guidance, very high quality teaching and learning and an exciting curriculum also contribute much to pupils' success. As a result of these many very positive features pupils reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils benefit from an 'all-round' education, and also reach high standards in the other taught subjects.

Pupils take part enthusiastically in a good range of sports and adopt healthy lifestyles. They say that learning is, 'exciting, and challenging, we even learn jokes'. Their personal development is outstanding. Pupils grow in confidence, take responsibility, learn how to be enterprising and contribute much to their community. Pupils' outstanding behaviour reflects very good racial harmony.

When children start in the Foundation Stage (Reception class), they have the skills that are usually expected for their age. They make outstanding 'all round' progress because of the focus on basic skills, interesting and creative activities, high quality assessments of children's needs and outstanding teaching. Staff make very good use of the school's garden and climbing areas to extend children's learning. However, these areas are not close to the Reception classroom and this means that there are missed opportunities for spontaneous outside learning. The headteacher has excellent vision to provide an adjoining, all-weather, outside learning area for the youngest pupils and plans are at an early stage of development for this.

Pupils like their school, as one said, 'It's brilliant.' Parents have great confidence in all that the school does. One commented, 'I am extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and buzz generated by the children.' Many also wrote to the inspector to say that they could not praise the school highly enough.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant weaknesses, but leaders are constantly striving to develop even further. Within their plans they are correctly exploring how to:

- Link an 'all-weather' outside learning area directly to the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement in the school is outstanding. When children start in the Reception class their skills and knowledge are as expected. They make outstanding progress, especially in gaining basic reading and writing skills and in their physical development. They make exemplary progress in learning how to count, calculate simply and, understand about shapes and measurement. By the end of their Reception Year the standards reached are above those expected in all areas.

Between Years 1 and 6, pupils make outstanding progress. Standards are above average in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 and are exceptionally high in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards have risen further, so that they are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Over 50% of pupils reach the higher level in their work and in science this is close to 90%. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported and, as a result, many reach the expected average by the end of Year 6. Pupils from all cultural backgrounds make very good progress because of very high expectations and effective support. Pupils' learning English as an additional language achieve outstandingly well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as reflected in their good attendance and outstanding relationships. Children make a very strong start in the Foundation Stage and this is where they begin to develop confidence and the ability to work successfully with others. They soon become enthused by problem-solving activities, which act as a very strong basis for their future success. As pupils move through the school they learn to work in teams, share responsibility, delegate and know the importance of good organisation. Pupils adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils have a good knowledge about most aspects of how to be safe in the world around them. The school is working to gain the Healthy Schools award as part of its final drive to ensure that pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is outstanding.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Cultural awareness is interwoven throughout the curriculum and ensures that pupils respect others, express their feelings with sensitivity and understand about many elements of art, music and literature. Pupils' outstanding behaviour, positive attitudes and racial harmony are great strengths of the school. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and wider community, especially through music, as evident when pupils played 'Pacobels Cannon', so beautifully.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is lively and exciting so that pupils can learn in many different ways. Pupils think of themselves as being on a mission to improve. For example, they call themselves the 'Learn Team' and often use music to inspire them. For example, the original 'A Team' television programme music was used to set a lively pace to their presentation about 'Life and times at Portswood Primary' and inspire them to get down to work. The very effective use of ICT and teachers' expertly phrased questions help pupils to explain, extend and record their thinking. This contributes significantly to the very high standards in mathematics. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects being taught; they plan lessons meticulously. They are very well supported by assistants. Pupils are encouraged to use their imaginations and demonstrate creative flair. For example, some Year 6 pupils made a wonderfully animated film on the theme of the 'Hungry Caterpillar'. English skills are very well promoted, with a strong focus on letter and sound work, speaking, drama, and editing of writing. Practical work is very exciting and challenging in both mathematics and science.

Children in the Foundation Stage thoroughly enjoy learning and staff work hard to provide a very good range of activities. To do this, outside activities have to take place some distance away from the Reception classroom. While this does not detract from children's outstanding

achievement, it hampers spontaneous learning as children cannot move freely from their classroom to an adjoining outside area.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to meet the very wide range of pupils' needs. It ensures high academic standards, a passion for learning, growth in self-confidence and the opportunity to learn many wide ranging skills and hobbies for life. There are very strong links between subjects and pupils can explore things in depth. In technology, for example, pupils have created complex designs and models of a 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' car and have also made sweets to support their learning in music and English. An excellent range of visits and clubs contribute much to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The school has been involved in several national research projects, including supporting gifted and talented pupils. As a result, higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to immerse themselves in high quality work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents confirm that, 'Complete care is considered first and foremost'. Very effective support is given to vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties. In the last year the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language has been evaluated, improved and checked again, so that the assessment, planning and support for this group of learners is outstanding. Assessment information is used very skilfully to ensure that pupils know how to develop and improve. Pupils say, 'Teachers show us step by step and set us goals'. Family learning, home visits, links with many professionals and open access to teachers aid the care and support provided. Child protection is rigorous.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

One parent sums up leadership very well when commenting that, 'Leaders are 'Full of good ideas... inspired, innovative and visionary'. This comes from the headteacher who provides outstanding leadership with senior staff. Governance is outstanding and team work is very strong. Together, leaders at all levels demonstrate a rigorous focus on standards, pupils' enjoyment and success in learning. The quality of evaluation of the school's performance and the planning for improvement are exemplary, as is the checking of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are inspired to work as a team and share best practice. Teaching and learning have improved to become outstanding and the school provides support for 35 primary schools across several counties. The school has a very good capacity to improve. As one parent said, 'In the past year the school has become even better.'

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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 the learners' needs?	1
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

¹ 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.

Annex A

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Portswood Primary School, Southampton, SO17 3AA

You may remember that I came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

Your school is outstanding, which means that it does many things especially well and there is very little that needs to be done to improve. I know that you value being in such a happy, caring school. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Your teachers give you many exciting activities to do and they know how to make sure that you learn new things well. You work hard and make very good progress. Clearly you enjoy coming to school, like learning and behave extremely well. Please keep this up, as it is outstanding! Your work in English, mathematics and science is exceptionally high quality and much better than I see in many other schools. Congratulations for this! I was very pleased to attend your Year 6 assembly. The 'Learn Team' was great, as was the musical performance of Pacabel's Cannon. I was very impressed by the wonderful 'Hungry Caterpillar' film.

Your headteacher wants to make the school even better. I agree with her that it will be very useful to explore ways of:

- making an outside learning area that is joined directly to the Reception class.

This will mean that the youngest children will be able to move more easily in-and- out of their classroom while they do their different activities.

Keep up the very good work. Well done! You are a great credit to your school and your parents! You are learning the things that will help you to do well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector