Plymouth Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105443
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	377244
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Leaver
Headteacher	Michael Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	04 March 2009
School address	Plymouth Grove West Chorlton-on-Medlock Manchester M13 0AQ
Telephone number	0161 2731453
Fax number	0161 2743126
Email address	head@plymouthgrove.manchester.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	16–17 November 2011
Inspection number	377244

he Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 15 teachers. The inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, particularly relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 118 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school is working to raise attainment in writing and mathematics.
- The way the school manages the high number of pupils who join during the year.
- How successfully leaders are seeking to improve attendance.
- The extent that the governing body and subject leaders are involved in promoting school improvement.

Information about the school

Plymouth Grove is much larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is that of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. A high number of pupils join the school at times other than at the start of the school year. Many of these are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school holds a number of awards, including the Activemark and the Leading Parent Partnership Award, and has 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? 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

Plymouth Grove is a good school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has been central to the school's good improvement since the last inspection. Ably supported by the deputy headteacher, he has overseen initiatives that have raised standards, accelerated pupils' progress and improved the quality of teaching and leadership and management. Self-evaluation is accurate and gives leaders a clear view of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve further. The governing body is supportive of staff and pupils but not all members of the governing body are fully involved in evaluating the school's performance and in promoting its future development. Leadership of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Leaders of other subjects are not as skilled in evaluating learning and taking action to bring about improvement. Engagement with parents and carers has been strengthened, which is seen in the gaining of the Leading Parent Partnership Award. This has led to a significant improvement in pupils' attendance and impacted positively on their learning. The track record of leaders in making and sustaining improvements in recent years shows that the capacity for taking the school forward is good.

Although attainment by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics has been low in recent years, it has been rising and drawing closer to the national average. Improvements in writing mean pupils now use correctly structured sentences to convey their ideas. Their mathematical calculation and quick mental recall skills are now secure. As a result, last year, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected levels for their age in English and mathematics matched national averages. The proportion reaching the higher levels remained below average. Currently, pupils in Year 6 are on target to do similarly well in English and mathematics by the time they leave school with more reaching the higher levels. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. School data and work scrutiny clearly show that pupils also make good progress in other years. There is more to do. Pupils' writing is not always enlivened with imaginative vocabulary and pupils do not all have a firm grasp of mathematical terminology to enable them to explain their ideas clearly and deal with increasingly complex problems.

Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. Effective teaching has many strengths and there are examples of outstanding practice. Nevertheless, there are times when marking and discussion are not used successfully to set precise and challenging next steps in learning for pupils. This is particularly the case for the more

able. The provision is outstanding for pupils who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the care taken of their children while in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics, by:
  - extending pupils' vocabulary to enliven their writing
  - improving pupils' understanding of correct mathematical terminology to enable them to explain their ideas clearly and tackle increasingly complex problems
  - ensuring teachers use marking and discussion consistently to set precise and challenging next steps in learning for individual pupils.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - developing the expertise of leaders in subjects other than English, mathematics and ICT in evaluating learning and taking action to bring about improvement
  - ensuring all members of the governing body are fully involved in promoting school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils 2

Pupils achieve well from their generally low skill levels on entering school, especially in language and social development. Their good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning contribute positively to the good progress they make. Pupils take pleasure in their activities and are keen to do well. They have secure reading skills and enjoy writing to express their ideas, but lack creativity in doing so. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation and quick mental recall skills. They do not have a sufficiently well-developed understanding of key mathematical vocabulary. Pupils confidently use ICT to support their learning. This was evident when pupils in Year 5 were using the internet to research information about different planets in the solar system as part of their scientific studies. Attainment is rising. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and English make the same progress as other pupils because of the well-targeted support they receive. Pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English make good progress overall, and there are examples of outstanding progress. Pupils who start school at different times during the school year are welcomed and support resulting from prompt assessment enables them to make good progress. The progress of the more able pupils is accelerating and there is no significant difference between the achievement or the learning of different groups.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and know they can talk confidently to a member of staff if they have any worries or concerns. They adopt healthy lifestyles well, knowing the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. They add to the life of the school by taking on responsibilities. These include being a school councillor or a buddy to look after pupils new to the school. They contribute effectively to the wider community by taking part in local events and raising funds for charity. Pupils have a good understanding of the beliefs and traditions of cultures

different to their own. They are courteous, polite and interested in the ideas and opinions of others. Pupils' average attainment and attendance and the way they collaborate well with others shows that are soundly prepared for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account:	**2**
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 Taking into account:	**3**
Pupils' attendance[1]	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	**2**

How effective is the provision?

Teachers provide activities that are motivating and effective in promoting pupils' independent learning skills. They use a variety of teaching styles to engage all pupils. The objectives of the lesson are shared with pupils so that they are clear about what they are to learn and how to complete the activity successfully. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because teachers make learning fun. In lessons, teachers assess pupils' progress accurately, are alert to any lack of understanding and move quickly to put it right. Pupils are not always as clear about the next steps in their learning because the information given to them is not consistently precise and challenging enough. Adults promote good relationships, which lead to classrooms being friendly and calm places in which to learn. Teaching assistants provide effective support for all pupils and especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning to speak English.

The curriculum is enriched by a variety of well-attended extracurricular activities, including sports, music and art clubs. Visits to places of educational interest, including Stockport Air Raid Shelter Museum, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. Teachers' planning builds methodically on previous work but places insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of key mathematical vocabulary. Involvement in a wide range of partnerships effectively develops pupils' learning and development, particularly in sport and the arts. The opportunity to take part in a variety of festivals from different religions, including Christmas and Eid, makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. The Activemark award and Healthy School accreditation reflects the commitment to encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

The school is a safe and caring environment in which to learn. Staff are committed to caring for their pupils and are clear of the steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. The support for pupils who are potentially vulnerable because of their circumstances promotes their learning and development very effectively. This aspect of the school's work with families and a range of agencies is deeply established. Transition arrangements are comprehensive and ensure the effective integration into school life of the high number of pupils who join during the school year. Leaders have worked successfully to raise attendance and it continues to improve. Good attention is paid to ensuring those who have a planned absence do not fall behind. Well established partnerships with a variety of agencies ensure that extra support for individual pupils is readily available when required.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account:	**2**
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 leaders successfully inspire those involved in school life to share a common sense of purpose in raising attainment. As a result, morale is high among all staff. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and ICT are rigorous in monitoring and leading their subjects. Other leaders are, however, not as skilled in evaluating learning and taking action to bring about improvement. Staff are accountable for their pupils' progress and all work as a team to meet ambitious targets for all pupils. Governance is satisfactory. Although the governing body is supportive of the school not all members are fully involved in evaluating its performance and influencing its development.

There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among all members of the governing body and staff. Training for safeguarding is regular and of high quality, particularly in child protection. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good, with no form of discrimination being tolerated. Leaders have taken action to narrow the attainment gap between the different groups. This is proving successful, exemplified in the way that Somali pupils, who were identified as underachieving, were given extra support so they now make the same good progress as other pupils. Partnership activity effectively develops learning opportunities that the school could not provide on its own, such as in sport and music.

Leaders successfully promote community cohesion by carefully planning an audit of needs. As a result, staff encourage pupils to view their role as not only members of the school but also to consider their role in the local, national and international community. Improved engagement with parents and carers, especially those who are hard to reach, ensure they are now effectively involved in their children's learning and the work of the school.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account:	**2**
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	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	**2**

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well because of the good quality teaching they receive. Staff have a thorough understanding of how children of this age learn and progress. As a result, they provide activities that are practical, stimulating and effective in capturing and maintaining children's interest. Children's language development is effectively promoted by sessions led by teachers that stress the importance of linking letters and sounds. Teaching assistants, some of whom are relatively inexperienced, are not as skilled in delivering such sessions.

Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's personal, social and emotional development, as this is weak on entry to the nursery. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves and this successfully develops their skills as independent learners. They behave well and enjoy their activities. This was seen to good effect in the reception role play area, set up as a 'Bear Cave', in which they were exploring the difference between light and dark. At times, the planning for independent activities emphasises what children are to do rather than what they are to learn. This is particularly the case in the nursery.

The curriculum provides imaginative experiences that meet the needs of children effectively. It is enriched by opportunities to explore the local environment and to go on visits, such as to a local farm. The organisation and use of the outdoor areas to promote children's learning have been successfully improved since the last inspection. Good leadership ensures that children's progress is checked carefully and that welfare arrangements are comprehensive. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress, such as through their learning journals.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage Taking into account:	**2**
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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school and its staff' and, 'The staff at Plymouth Grove are dedicated and enthusiastic and are willing to go the extra mile for all the children.' The inspection team saw many examples in school that reflect parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Plymouth Grove 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 419 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	65	39	33	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	73	62	45	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	45	60	51	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	42	61	52	6	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	68	58	46	39	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	46	60	51	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	46	57	48	3	3	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	34	71	60	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	40	66	56	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	42	62	53	1	1	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	36	61	52	7	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	45	59	50	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	71	60	43	36	2	2	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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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 pupils' 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.

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plymouth Grove Primary School, Manchester, M13 0AQ

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that yours is a good school and that:

- you make good progress and attain broadly average attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6
- staff look after you well and make sure you are safe in school
- you make a good contribution to the life of the school and the local community
- the school helps you to be healthy, as you indicated in your questionnaires
- you enjoy school, as is shown by your improving attendance
- staff and the governing body are working hard to help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now is to:

- improve your creative writing skills and your understanding of important mathematical vocabulary
- make sure that teachers always give you precise and challenging advice on how to improve
- fully involve all leaders of subjects and all members of the governing body in helping the school improve.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely,

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.