

Cassiobury Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 117293 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 364570 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 March 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Philip Mann HMI |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 267 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Tara Slater |
| Headteacher | Caroline Daniels |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 January 2007 |
| School address | Bellmount Wood Avenue Watford WD17 3PE |
| Telephone number | 01923 222782 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 15 lessons and nine teachers, either teaching whole classes or smaller groups of pupils. Other short observations were made of support staff working with small groups of children. Brief discussions were held with a number of parents and carers, and inspectors met with groups of pupils. Inspectors also held meetings with representatives of the governing body, senior staff and subject leaders. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation form, school improvement planning, monitoring reports and various policies. Inspectors also analysed 168 parental questionnaires and the results of surveys to staff and pupils.

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

- How effective is the provision in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language?
- How effective is the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- The promotion of community cohesion as the school moves through a period of expansion.
- The effectiveness of monitoring and self-evaluation to support school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is average in size but going through a period of expansion to three-form entry. The pupils come from an increasingly diverse community with about a half from minority ethnic backgrounds. Just over a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very small. The school continues to hold Healthy Schools status and the Active Mark and Investors in People awards.

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

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school with good capacity for further improvement. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection and a trend of high attainment has been sustained. Senior leaders, together with a dedicated governing body, are providing very clear direction to ensure the maintenance of high quality provision while the school enters a period of expansion. Inclusion is at the forefront of everything the school does and as a result the promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Many different nationalities are represented within the growing school population. Parents and carers from these diverse backgrounds are very complimentary about how they have been made to feel part of this school community. Comments such as, 'I am very happy with this school. The staff are wonderful and my child is very happy,' and, 'I feel my son is very comfortable coming to school as it feels very homely,' fully reflect the views of the vast proportion of parents and carers.

The level of care, guidance and support demonstrated by staff to all pupils is outstanding. All pupils are valued as individuals who are nurtured to reach their potential. Highly effective support is targeted to those who have specific emotional and learning needs and/or speak English as an additional language. The impact of this support is precisely documented and adjusted accordingly. These pupils quickly grow in confidence, their self-esteem is boosted and they make rapid progress. The school has an excellent record in getting many of these pupils to a point where minimal support is required.

Good and sometimes outstanding teaching is ensuring that all pupils achieve very well. The quality of the curriculum is outstanding throughout the school and fully meets the needs of all age and ability groups. Children in Early Years Foundation Stage develop quickly because of the imaginative learning opportunities planned for them. Outdoor learning is a significant strength. Pupils in Key Stage 1 demonstrate a thirst for learning and are keen to attend school. Relationships between pupils and staff and among pupils themselves are extremely positive because of very high quality provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils' contribution to their own school and wider community is impressive. They are extremely clear about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and what they need to do to stay safe.

The partnership with parents and carers is excellent. They find the staff easy to talk to about any issues and concerns because comprehensive lines of communication between school and home facilitate the sharing of information about the progress a child is making and what is happening in school. They express pleasure at being able to participate in practical homework activities with their child. A wide range of workshops provide further information about how to help their child learn at home.

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Governance is good. The governing body is well organised and works closely with the headteacher and staff to oversee school improvement for the benefit of the whole community. Self-evaluation is accurate because school leaders and the governing body monitor the school's work regularly to create a shared understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Very effective use is made of this information to formulate detailed plans that lead to further improvement. However, a growing amount of data related to pupils' outcomes is yet to be systematically analysed to identify trends and patterns between different groups, which can then be used to monitor achievement and support future school improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by:
 - ensuring that data related to pupil outcomes is analysed with greater precision to identify areas for further school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Achievement is outstanding. A trend of high attainment has been sustained for the last three years with standards in reading, writing and mathematics well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in writing is significantly above average. All pupils make good or better progress from starting points that are above the levels expected nationally when they enter Reception. They make particularly good progress in literacy skills through the daily teaching of letter names and sounds (phonics) and many opportunities for speaking and listening. Their knowledge and use of an increasingly more complex vocabulary make a significant contribution to their achievements in reading and writing. Furthermore, pupils display growing levels of confidence in expressing their ideas through their writing because of the successful implementation of the 'Talk for Writing' initiative. For instance, pupils in Year 2 portrayed a new character for inclusion in their story by acting out little scenarios in a drama activity. This strong focus on literacy development fully prepares pupils for their next stages in education and later life. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent support provided for them.

Pupils' attitudes towards learning are excellent. This is confirmed by their impeccable behaviour during the inspection and the large number of very positive comments in their responses to the questionnaire. Attendance is good. Older pupils value having a voice in school improvement through the active school council. They contribute fully to both their school and local communities. For example, they take on responsibilities in the playground such as being a 'peer mediator' - demonstrating a great sense of responsibility and caring towards others during playtimes as they assist adult staff in reconciling any disagreements between other pupils - and raise money for local and national charities. Pupils are developing a very clear understanding of other faiths and cultures through the excellent use of visitors in assemblies and lessons to cover a wide range of topics.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are predominantly good or better across the school, and no inadequate teaching was seen. The quality is particularly good in Year 2, where teaching is dynamic and ensures high levels of achievement. Common features in the lessons observed included good subject knowledge, detailed planning and good use of assessment information to ensure that tasks are fully matched to the needs of pupils. Staff are competent at using the interactive whiteboards to illustrate key teaching points, although these are not always used to best advantage to fully engage pupils in activities that reinforce their learning. Support staff play a vital role in lessons, working with pupils who speak English as an additional language or those who have specific needs to boost levels of achievement. All staff contribute to the effective teaching of phonics. The quality of marking is good and clearly identifies what pupils need to do next to improve.

Comprehensive planning provides a very effective balance between ensuring high standards in core skills such as literacy and numeracy and the development of pupils' imagination and creativity. Many opportunities are provided for the development of pupils' personal and social skills. Strong links have been established with other organisations such as the local sports partnership to enrich the curriculum. Contact with other schools both locally and abroad supports the promotion of community cohesion very well. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is particularly impressive.

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The quality of care, guidance and support for all pupils is outstanding. All pupils are nurtured as individuals within a very inclusive school community. Staff rapidly respond to specific concerns by using expertise within the school or seeking extra professional support. Safeguarding is extremely robust and staff make every effort to provide the highest level of care to all pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team have ensured that staff maintain a clear ambition for continually improving standards during the school's expansion. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning is clearly focused on improving outcomes for pupils and key priorities for school development. More sharply focused monitoring visits by governors now provide them with the opportunity to hold the school to account about any further areas for development. The governing body ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met, and far exceed them in their excellent safeguarding procedures and practice. Strategic planning is comprehensive and clearly identifies key priorities and lines of responsibility. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on careful monitoring and the regular gathering of parental opinion and pupils' views. However, the systematic analysis of performance data to both monitor pupils' achievement and identify further areas for improvement is underdeveloped.

In this highly inclusive school, the contributions of all are valued and discrimination is not tolerated. Outstanding leadership by the inclusion manager ensures that each pupil gets the extra support they need, and staff go to great lengths to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and those in receipt of a free school meal have every opportunity to succeed as well as their peers. Furthermore, the partnership with parents and carers and the wider community is very strong. The school is making effective use of both formal and informal means to identify the needs of its rapidly changing community to inform improvement planning. Staff continually strive to include all those from diverse backgrounds and religious groups in school life and their child's learning through activities such as coffee mornings and literacy workshops for parents and carers who speak English as an additional language.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good or better progress in all areas of learning because of high quality teaching and a highly imaginative and well-planned curriculum. Children have many excellent opportunities to learn through creative play in the highly stimulating outdoor play and woodland areas. Considerable emphasis is placed on the development of the children's early literacy skills through the very effective teaching of phonics and opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Staff continually encourage children to develop their vocabulary and use of imagination in many stimulating role-play activities. For example, children engaged in little conversations as they built a wall of blocks to keep 'Peter Rabbit' away from their vegetable plot or build nests for animals in the woodland area. Number work is incorporated effectively into other areas of learning and practical activities to give relevance to children about mathematics in the world around them.

Relationships among children and adults are extremely positive at all levels. Teamwork is a significant strength. Staff jointly plan and organise an extensive range of imaginative learning experiences for all children under the clear direction of the Foundation Stage leader. The level of care, guidance and support for children is outstanding and children, including those who speak little or no English or have specific needs rapidly grow in confidence. One parent commented that, 'My son feels very comfortable at school. He has developed dramatically since starting in September.' The ongoing assessment of the children's progress is effective because staff ensure that significant milestones in the children's learning are carefully recorded in books that are shared with parents and carers. This information is used very effectively to ensure activities are carefully matched to the individual needs of each child. Self-evaluation is based on the regular monitoring of provision through ongoing observations in line with whole-school priorities. However, the

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systematic analysis of data related to the achievement of the children to identify areas of further improvement is at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| 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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the quality of teaching and opportunities for their child to learn at school. A small number expressed a wish to have more information about how to help their child learn at home and the progress that they are making at school. Inspectors were impressed with the range of opportunities that parents and carers have to become involved with their child's learning. They also noted that teachers are very willing to talk to parents and carers about any concerns that they may have about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cassiobury Infant and Nursery 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 168 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 267 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 119 | 71 | 46 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 108 | 64 | 55 | 33 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 67 | 40 | 93 | 55 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 78 | 46 | 77 | 46 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 93 | 55 | 67 | 40 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 79 | 47 | 69 | 41 | 15 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 93 | 55 | 68 | 40 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 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) | 70 | 42 | 75 | 45 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 80 | 48 | 70 | 42 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 79 | 47 | 80 | 48 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 65 | 39 | 78 | 46 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 84 | 50 | 71 | 42 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 90 | 54 | 74 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 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 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 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 2009/10 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: | <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 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.



24 March 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Cassiobury Infant and Nursery School, Watford, WD17 3PE

I would like to thank you all on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome and telling us your views. We really enjoyed visiting your school and were so impressed with your excellent behaviour, attitudes towards learning and how everyone really feels included in everything the school does.

Many of your parents and carers told us how much you enjoy being at school and how good it is. We agree with them and in fact we think the school is outstanding! This is because the school is led extremely well and all the staff work hard as a team to make sure that you are looked after and helped to succeed. The teachers have worked very hard to improve your reading and writing. This has been successful and you are all making very progress in these important skills.

The teachers plan many interesting things for you to do and their good teaching means that you do well in lessons. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes get some fantastic opportunities to learn in the outdoor area and Spinney. Many exciting things are planned for those of you in Years 1 and 2 and the teachers provide many opportunities for you to work with your classmates. The staff always listen to your worries and provide excellent care and support for you all. We were really impressed by what you know about keeping safe and being healthy.

The teachers keep a record of how well you are doing in lessons and use this well to help you improve. The headteacher, senior staff and governors make lots of observations of you learning in lessons to look for things that can be improved. We have asked them to look even more closely at the information they collect to make the school even better. You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector

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