

Phoenix Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122532
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380486
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2011
Reporting inspector	John Paddick

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doreen Leighton
Headteacher	Sue Sprengel
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 12 lessons taught by eight different teachers. Inspectors scrutinised a wide variety of pupils' work, especially in writing and mathematics. They held meetings with the headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the special educational needs coordinator and three members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils from Year 2. They observed the school's work and looked at minutes of the governing body meetings, the school development plan, records of pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors analysed 88 questionnaires from parents and carers and 22 from members of staff.

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

- What standards are pupils in Year 2 reaching in reading, writing and mathematics?
- Do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress at the same rate as other pupils?
- Are pupils now provided with more opportunities to speak and listen?
- Do children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make at least average progress towards all of the early learning goals?
- Are members of the governing body keeping a better check on the school's progress than they did at the time of the previous inspection?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. Most pupils are White British and very few are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but rising. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make up around a tenth of the school roll. This is below the national average. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils who join part way through their primary school education is below average.

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

Phoenix Infant and Nursery School provides its pupils with a good standard of education. It is a happy and welcoming school where care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. There is an exceptionally good and extremely productive engagement with parents and carers who are full of praise for the way that the school educates their children. One parent wrote, 'I could not ask for a better start to my child's education.' Teachers and teaching assistants know all of the children extremely well and ensure that their needs are fully met. This ensures that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Managers check on progress regularly and effectively so they have an accurate picture of how well pupils are getting on. When tracking data indicate that pupils have problems or that they are underachieving this triggers effective extra assistance. However, the attainment targets that the school sets for its Year 2 pupils are largely based on expected or average rates of progress from the beginning of Year 1 to the end of Year 2 rather than having more of an element of challenge. This results in the school exceeding its targets rather than actively seeking to raise attainment into the above average range by the end of Year 2.

The school runs very smoothly on a daily basis and it is characterised by a good atmosphere for learning, pupils who behave well and good quality, interesting and varied lessons. Pupils say that they feel perfectly safe and that they enjoy the activities that the school provides for them. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education and they make good progress in most areas of learning. The main exception is writing where progress has recently been satisfactory rather than good and where attainment has been below the expected levels on transfer to Year 1. However, in their four years in school pupils achieve well overall because they start in Nursery with substantially below average stages of development for their ages and reach average standards by the end of Year 2. The school's capacity for further improvement is good because it is well led and there has been an effective focus on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, there are now many more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and the governing body keeps a far more rigorous check than previously on the quality of education that the school provides. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and planning for improvement is carried out with precision.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics to above average by the end of Year 2 by:
 - setting more challenging targets for pupils to achieve
 - rigorously monitoring these targets throughout Years 1 and 2.
- Improve attainment in writing to at least average levels by the end of Reception by:
 - providing more adult-led and child-initiated opportunities for the development of writing throughout the Early Years programme.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Over the last two years, assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been broadly average and much better than in 2009 when they were below average. Classroom observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work during the inspection confirm that these standards are being maintained. In class, inspectors observed pupils of all abilities making good progress in response to work and explanations that were matched well to their needs. For example in lessons on telling the time in Year 2, all pupils rapidly picked up the meaning of the large and small hands on a clock face and many were confident with 'half past', 'quarter past' and 'quarter to'. Currently in Year 2, pupils' written work in English and mathematics is extensive, generally neatly presented and logically set out. Pupils are developing their handwriting, sentence construction, spelling and basic numerical skills well.

The school's accurate and extensive tracking records show that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are currently making progress at the same rate as other pupils in the school. Inspectors found many examples of these pupils making good progress in class in response to effective and often imaginative approaches.

Pupils display good attitudes to learning and behave well. They are polite, cooperative and keen to do as well as they can. As they move through the school, the development of their confidence and self-esteem is impressive. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and know why it is important to be involved in activities which include physical exercise. They engage enthusiastically in a wide range of activities, especially music, sport and visits. Their attendance is above average and persistent absence has recently reduced to very low levels. Pupils are eager to take responsibility and speak enthusiastically about the efforts they have made to raise money for charities and especially for children in other countries.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and classroom assistants manage pupils well so there is always a good learning atmosphere in lessons. They provide plenty of interesting and challenging activities which usually sustain pupils’ engagement and interest. In the best lessons, teachers present concepts and develop pupils’ understanding of topics in an imaginative variety of ways to ensure that learning is secure. Usually teachers employ a compelling style which fully engages pupils’ attention. However, there are occasions when some pupils are not fully engaged by teachers’ explanations and questioning. Teachers plan well for pupils of all ability and ensure that classroom assistants have a clear and effective brief with which to assist groups of pupils or individuals with work at a specific level. Teachers generally mark pupils’ work well but there are some instances of errors not being corrected. The school’s very good tracking systems clearly show the standards pupils are reaching and the amount of progress they are making, and they identify those who need extra help to enable them to reach their targets.

The combination of good teaching, good curricular planning and excellent care, guidance and support enables all groups of pupils to make good progress with their learning and personal development. Pupils recognise that they benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities and speak enthusiastically about visits arranged for them. A strong and effective emphasis on music and performance helps to promote pupils’ confidence and self-esteem. Pupils say that they get plenty of help when they need it. Often this is on a one-to-one basis and involves a variety of effective techniques that enable them to catch up when it is evident that they are falling behind. Excellent transition arrangements with local junior schools mean that pupils

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

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are extremely well prepared for their transfer to year 3. The school can point to many examples where high quality support for some of its more vulnerable pupils has enabled them to overcome very significant barriers to learning and progress. Parents and carers recognise that the school will 'go the extra mile' to ensure that their children achieve well.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides the school with strong and effective leadership. She is very ably supported by her senior team and has the full confidence of staff and parents and carers. All members of staff think that their contribution to the school is fully valued and consequently their collective morale is excellent. Governance is good. Members of the governing body have a good understanding of the school's strong features and know what still needs to be improved. Since the previous inspection, they have probed much more deeply than previously and have become much more involved in obtaining first-hand experience of lessons, assemblies and other activities. Members of staff have been successful in developing an exceptionally productive partnership with parents and carers who have a high regard for the school and attend functions and meetings about their children's progress in unusually large numbers.

Good safeguarding systems are firmly in place and have a high profile in the daily running of the school. Procedures for checking the identities of all of the adults admitted to the site are extremely rigorous. The school promotes equal opportunities well. There is little difference between the performance of groups of pupils and no evidence of any discrimination. Good partnerships with outside agencies and specialists help to ensure that the school provides effective extra help for the pupils who have the greatest level of need. Strong partnerships with local schools mean that a smooth transfer of pupils from Year 2 to Year 3 is managed well. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils are involved in many productive activities which help to draw the local community together and there are developing arrangements to give them greater first-hand access to people from other cultures. Links with countries in Africa provide pupils with good opportunities to learn about how other people live and to raise money for worthwhile projects in other lands.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	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 in Nursery and Reception benefit from a welcoming and safe environment, and excellent personal support. Good, imaginative and often personalised teaching enables each cohort of children to make good progress by the end of Reception. The majority of children reach most of the statutory early goals by the time they transfer to Year 1 but for many, attainment in writing is still below average at this stage.

The inside and outside areas are imaginatively laid out and provide children with a good environment in which to learn, play, make friends, investigate and explore. Teachers and their assistants ensure that the atmosphere for learning is good and they take every opportunity to develop children’s speech and vocabulary by engaging them in conversation about what they are doing. Occasionally, however, the approaches used in ‘circle time’ do not fully engage the attention of the whole group.

Good leadership and management ensure that staff morale remains high and that there is an effective focus on learning and personal development. There have been many staff changes over the past two years but a much more settled team is beginning to have a positive impact on children’s progress. A good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities ensures that children progress well in response to a wide variety of approaches. Accurate and regular assessment quickly identifies children who are making good progress and those who need extra help to overcome barriers to learning. This extra assistance is frequently provided on a one-to-one basis. Parents and carers are very happy about the way that members of staff look after their children and provide them with a good quality of education

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents’ and carers’ views are almost entirely positive about all aspects of the way that the school provides for their children. These positive views very closely match the findings of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Phoenix 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 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	83	15	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	85	12	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	51	58	34	39	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	68	27	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	59	67	24	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	57	65	27	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	74	21	24	1	1	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)	55	63	24	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	54	61	28	32	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	60	30	34	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	61	29	33	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	65	74	21	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	71	81	16	18	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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 are 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:	<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.



14 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Phoenix Infant and Nursery School, Gedling, NG4 4EL

Thank you for making me and my fellow inspectors so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We were really impressed by your good behaviour and the way that you relate to visitors. A particular thank you goes to those of you who met with us at lunchtime to talk about your school. Another thank you goes to those of you who were so keen to show us your work in class. We were very pleased to know that you really enjoy being at school and that you are so keen to do well.

We found that your school is providing you with a good quality of education. Most of you are making good progress because teaching is good and you receive excellent support from all of the adults who work with you. Your teachers use a very good system for finding out how well you are doing and the school provides you with extra help if you fall behind.

Your school can still improve further and we have asked the governing body, headteacher and staff to make some changes to help you make even better progress. These are to:

- help the older pupils to reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics
- provide more activities for younger children to help to improve their writing.

You can all help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

Yours sincerely

John Paddick
Lead inspector

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