

Cottenham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110604
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	395402
Inspection dates	31 May – 1 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Worgan

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 of pupils on the school roll	571
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Siobhan Lihoreau
Headteacher	James Kilsby
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Worgan	Additional Inspector
Gillian Scobie	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Rudman	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 19 teachers. They also observed a range of intervention and phonics (the sounds that letters make) sessions, listened to pupils reading and looked at their work. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff and governors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation documents and action plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires returned by 225 parents and carers were received and were analysed, along with those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a growing school and much larger than the average-sized primary, serving the village of Cottenham and surrounding areas. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. Fewer pupils than in most schools are known to be entitled to free school meals. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are lower than the national average, although rising. There is a significant and growing Gypsy Roma Traveller population.

The school has the Health Promoting Schools Award, The School Achievement Award, the Inclusion Equality Award and the Arts Council Artsmark. The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Cottenham is a good school where pupils achieve well. The school’s motto ‘Where everyone can make their mark’ reflects its inclusive philosophy. Pupils feel happy, are safe and love learning. It is not yet an outstanding school because, while pupils are making good and improving progress, achievement is not yet consistently outstanding.
- Pupils make good progress from starting points in line with those typically expected. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress, consolidating their personal development and reaching the progress targets set by the school. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good. The school’s tracking data indicate that pupils’ progress in Year 6 is considerably better than in the previous year, when performance dipped. This is supported by inspectors’ examination of their work.
- Teaching is good. It was good or better in most lessons seen, with few lessons that were satisfactory. Strategies introduced by the school to improve teaching have had a significant impact on progress. The quality of marking is sometimes inconsistent.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and considerate. There are few instances of bullying of any kind. Behaviour seen was of a high standard and school logs show that this is typical. Pupils feel safe and speak highly of the support which they receive.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher’s vision of achievement for all is shared throughout the school. The curriculum provides a wide range of enrichment activities. Leaders and managers are clear about what needs to improve and teachers’ performance is monitored thoroughly. Professional development focuses on improving teaching. However, the school does not monitor sufficiently closely the performance of different groups of pupils to measure the impact of interventions.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and make more teaching outstanding by:
 - ensuring that marking gives pupils clear guidance on the steps which they need to take to reach the next level of attainment
 - using data strategically to assist staff in monitoring the performance of different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers commented on how pleased they were with their children's good progress and their children's desire to learn. Children enter the school with the knowledge and skills expected for their ages. They then make good progress, especially in number and literacy skills in the Reception year. Social and emotional development is effectively promoted. Adults support the children's learning well, engaging children in thoughtful talk about their activities and extending thinking through good questioning. Children co-operate well and behaviour is good.

At Key Stage 1, progress is good. There has been a clear improvement in mathematics. Inspectors saw evidence of good progress in pupils' work, especially in Year 2, where teaching is adapted skilfully to cater for the needs of pupils with a range of abilities, enabling all to reach challenging but realistic targets. In the national tests in 2011 for Year 6, attainment dipped below the high standard of previous years. The school's data for the current Year 6 indicate that there has been significant improvement in both English and mathematics. This judgement was confirmed by lesson observations, work scrutiny and discussion with pupils. Girls, whose performance fell below that of boys last year, are now performing well, especially in English and at higher levels of attainment.

Attainment in reading is high by the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Pupils read confidently and fluently to inspectors and effective, targeted support enables weaker readers to improve rapidly. Due to well-planned support, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making comparable progress to other pupils in the school. This is because well-targeted interventions and in-class support, which encourages independent learning, enable them to make good progress. Data on the relative performance of these groups is not yet analysed at a strategic level to gauge the effectiveness of support strategies, however.

Quality of teaching

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Parents and carers say they feel their children are well taught at the school. As one parent said, 'The teaching has built up my son's confidence tremendously and the work he is given is stimulating and absorbing'. In the good and outstanding lessons seen, pupils were challenged and inspired by tasks which were adapted to their needs and abilities. In a lower ability Year 5/6 mathematics lesson on decimals, pupils were organised into groups with a range of tasks and targeted support which enabled them to make good progress and to develop the confidence to tackle problems independently. This 'targeted group work' was a feature of many lessons seen and was appreciated by pupils; as one from this group said, 'I have got much more confident. If we are not getting on you get help but they let you try it on your own first'. In the more successful lessons, pupils are actively involved and work together successfully in pairs and groups. Consequently they make good progress. In these lessons, teachers' good questioning skills promote learning well. In a year 5/6 mathematics lesson, pupils were challenged to speculate on probabilities in realistic contexts and more-able pupils were able to develop sophisticated hypotheses.

Independent learning is encouraged from an early age. In a Reception class, children were given a range of materials with which to make crowns for the Jubilee party the following day and were encouraged to choose materials and to develop a design for themselves. In the very few less successful lessons, opportunities for active and co-operative learning were limited. More-able pupils had fewer opportunities to develop their skills; consequently there was some restless behaviour.

Reading is well taught. In an outstanding guided reading session, pupils worked in pairs, checking each others' reading with support from teaching assistants. Gypsy Roma Traveller children in the group received targeted support and were making excellent progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well taught and are consequently making good progress. The system of setting across year groups and the guided group work within classes enables their needs to be catered for well. Pupils expressed confidence in the support which they receive and the intervention sessions observed were of high quality.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Cottenham Primary School is an extremely well-ordered community where good behaviour and careful attention to safety, and excellent pastoral care and support, help pupils develop good personal skills fostering their positive attitudes to learning. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires agree that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good. As one parent said, 'The school does a fabulous job of caring for the pupils, really stretching, growing and building their learning and caring very much for their broader development.'

Inspectors saw good behaviour in the majority of lessons with occasional exceptions only when teaching was less engaging. In their questionnaires few pupils said that there are instances when lessons are interrupted by poor behaviour. Discussions with pupils and the school's own behaviour records show that this is typical. The community of Gypsy Roma Travellers within the school is exceptionally well

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supported with dedicated staff catering for their needs and supplying and following up work when they are travelling. Their culture is celebrated and they are fully integrated and welcomed by the school community.

Pupils, in their questionnaires and in discussion, said they feel safe in school and are confident that teachers deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour promptly and well. They said that there were clear rules which were applied fairly and that staff are sympathetic and supportive when they have problems. Bullying is very rare and pupils report that when minor instances occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying including cyber bullying.

Leadership and management

Good leadership is the keystone of the success of the school. The drive, ambition and clear direction of the headteacher, with good support from senior staff and members of the governing body, is recognised by the whole community. As one parent stated, 'It is a fabulous school run by a management team with integrity and maturity. There is no complacency'. The headteacher's purposeful approach encourages the highest aspirations in pupils and staff. Leaders and managers have a clear focus on raising the achievement of all pupils which is shared by all staff. Professional development in group work and the teaching of reading is having a clear impact on the quality of teaching and on pupil progress, as is robust performance management. The school has a strong capacity to improve and this is clearly evidenced by the way in which the recent dip in performance was analysed rigorously, causes identified and actions focused on addressing them. The headteacher has a clear long-term vision for the development of the school which places the individual pupil at the centre, despite the large size of the school and plans for further expansion.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and themed weeks. Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted well. This was illustrated during the inspection by two impressive events. Younger children participated in Jubilee celebrations which included playground games from the 1950s and a tea party. Older pupils completed a unit of work on the Second World War with a commemoration of V E Day when veterans and parents were invited to view a range of work including archive material gathered by pupils and a musical celebration. Through these events and other activities throughout the year, pupils develop strong awareness of their own and other cultures and demonstrate strong social skills and spiritual awareness.

The school is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination and pupils have a sense of belonging, fostered by the inclusive ethos. This is particularly evident in the ways in which Gypsy Roma Travellers are supported and integrated and their culture celebrated. There is good pastoral support, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. However, the impact of interventions to support these pupils' progress is not measured sufficiently well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Policies and procedures are effective and the governing body plays an active role in promoting and monitoring pupils' safety. Governance overall is strong with a

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skilled and supportive governing body which challenges and monitors school effectiveness well and is fully involved in school self-evaluation and strategic planning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



4 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cottenham Primary School, Cambridge, CB24 8TA

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You are polite and friendly and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school through questionnaires and discussions. Cottenham is a good school, which means that most things are good and a few things need to be better.

These are some of the things that stood out about your school:

- You and your teachers have worked hard to improve your progress and results are improving.
- Your school is a safe place and staff care for you well and help you when you have problems or difficulties.
- You obviously enjoy learning and are given lots of exciting things to do. We were particularly impressed by the way in which you celebrated the Queen's Jubilee and V E day by showing the excellent work which you have done.

We have asked your school to do a few things to improve. These are to:

- improve marking by giving you clear guidance on the steps which you need to take to reach the next level
- use information about how you are doing to help you to improve your work, especially those of you who have difficulties with your learning.

You can help the school improve by always working hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

John Worgan
Lead Inspector

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