

The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 111001 |
| Local authority | Warrington |
| Inspection number | 378212 |
| Inspection dates | 27–28 June 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Tim Vaughan HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 381 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ruth Grocott |
| Headteacher | Yvette Blake |
| Date of previous school inspection | 27 September 2006 |
| School address | Wood Lane Appleton Warrington WA4 3DB |
| Telephone number | 01925 264616 |
| Fax number | 01925 262504 |
| Email address | cobbs_infant_@warrington.gov.uk |



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Introduction

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan
Sue Smith
Liam Trippier

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 12 teachers teaching 22 lessons and also observed the work of teaching assistants. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, monitoring reports, the work pupils were doing in their books and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding. Inspectors talked to pupils across the school and heard a range of pupils read. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection. During their time at the school, inspectors also analysed 158 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and took account of those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School is larger than the average-sized infant school and it has Nursery class provision. A large majority of pupils are drawn from the Appleton and Stockton Heath areas of Warrington.

A small number of children are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority of children speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is below average. There is very little pupil mobility. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has achieved a wide range of awards including the Arts Mark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, NAACE ICT Mark, Eco Schools bronze status, Activemark for sport and physical education, Investors in People status and has achieved Healthy School status.

Jolly Days Link Club and The Cygnets Children's Centre share a site with the school. These settings are inspected separately and were not part of this inspection.

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

- This is a good school. Well developed provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2 ensures that children get a good start to their education. All pupils enjoy school and benefit from a broad curriculum that makes good use of a wide range of enrichment activities. As a result, pupils are well prepared for future learning. The school is not outstanding because there is not enough excellent teaching across the school to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.
- Tracking of pupils' progress is well developed across classes; however, the analysis of children's starting points in Nursery is insufficiently clear. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage children attain above national expectations. By the time that they leave the school they attain above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils enjoy school and treat each other and the school environment with respect. They know how to keep themselves and others safe and they behave well. There are few incidents of bullying and pupils, parents and carers are confident that issues that they raise will be dealt with by the school.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good. Some teaching is outstanding. This is because in these lessons, the teachers skilfully adapt their interventions to individual pupils and create an excitement for learning within activities. However, written feedback in pupils' books is underdeveloped.
- The headteacher leads teaching and manages staff performance well. Together with the governing body she has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders and staff have a shared vision for improvement and are ambitious for the school to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding learning and teaching by:
 - ensuring that all tasks are matched to the needs of individual pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to be active in lessons
 - using the contribution of more pupils during lessons
 - increasing the use of written feedback in pupils' books.
- By October 2012, improve the evaluation of children's attainment on entry to Nursery by using the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to judge children's starting points.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school in Nursery with the expected skills for their age across the areas of learning and some have better skills than expected. For example, some Nursery children who spoke to an inspector were very confident, articulate and able to read simple words. Teachers and teaching assistants observe young children closely and use this within their curriculum planning. This means that staff know children well. During the inspection, inspectors observed children making good progress in lessons in Nursery and in the Reception Year.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children attain well, including in linking sounds and letters, reading and writing. Importantly they are also confident, capable communicators. Furthermore, overall attainment is improving year-on-year. However, the school has been using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to judge the attainment of children on entry to Nursery. This assessment instrument is for older children. As a result, school leaders have an insufficiently detailed understanding of the attainment of Nursery children on entry to the school and the progress that they have made against the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

All children enter Year 1 well prepared for the National Curriculum. In the best learning observed during the inspection, teachers carefully used previous assessments to inform lesson planning. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants continuously assessed pupils' learning. This is helped by clear systems of tracking pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2, much improved since the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils make good progress from their starting points, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs. For example, inspectors observed children with special educational needs making good progress in a Year 2 mathematics lesson because of careful support and assessment by a teacher and classroom assistant.

Pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is above average. This is because the school places a strong emphasis upon books and reading with pupils regularly taking reading books home. Pupils heard to read by inspectors were making good progress in understanding the sounds that letters make and used this knowledge with confidence in tackling new and unfamiliar words. Across classes, there are attractive collections of books and author displays. Pupils enjoy a range of literature and poetry, although the main school

library is less attractive and not used as often. Pupils read regularly to their parents and carers at home, although teachers' use of home–school records to support this is not always consistent.

By the time that pupils leave the school, their attainment is also above average in writing and mathematics. Responses to the parent questionnaire indicate that parents and carers have an accurate view of attainment, helped by the information regularly shared by the school. School leaders accurately identified that while the number of more able writers is above average, it had begun to decline within the school. A concerted effort to address this has led to a notable improvement in the number of children attaining Level 3 for writing in their Year 2 assessment in 2012.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching overall is good. Although some is outstanding, in a very few examples, it is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy lessons and almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe that their children are taught well. Good teaching is evident in each year group, including Nursery. Inspectors observed that this is helping disabled children and those with special educational needs to make good progress in their learning and in their personal well-being.

The best teaching observed during the inspection was characterised by opportunities for pupils to be active and contribute their views. For example, in an outstanding dance lesson in Reception, children were able to assess one another's performances and use this in order to improve. Such teaching happened in lessons where teachers regularly checked pupils' understanding and matched tasks well to the needs of individuals. In a good Year 2 mathematics lesson about coordinates and directional language, the teacher kept a clear sense of momentum to the lesson and the contribution of pupils was highly valued. She regularly checked pupils' understanding and this was very effectively consolidated at the plenary session. As a result, pupils enjoyed the lesson considerably and made good progress.

Strong teamwork between staff was observed to be enhancing the quality of teaching at the school. For example, in the Nursery, staff from two classes worked in synchrony across one shared indoor and outdoor space. In a Reception class, a teaching assistant, teaching a group of children with special educational needs the sounds that letters make, gave children very effective individualised attention through a multisensory game well-matched to their needs.

The school's carefully planned curriculum is topic based and makes good use of the school's attractive outdoor areas and emphasises the importance of local birds and wildlife. This helps pupils to develop a strong sense of responsibility and respect for their environment. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a gardening group led by the headteacher, is used very effectively to deepen pupils' experiences. Story, music and singing are also strong parts of the school curriculum. Off-site visits, visitors and assemblies are well used to broaden pupils' experiences and understanding. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The school has effectively addressed a recommendation made at the previous inspection to increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) within lessons. Throughout the school, pupils now use ICT in their learning with confidence. Teaching focuses upon discrete ICT skills as well as using ICT in a range of teaching activities.

The use of written feedback in pupils' books is underdeveloped and feedback to pupils is mostly verbal. As a result, some more able children are not being given enough detailed guidance about how to improve their work. In the home–school reading records, written teacher comments are also underdeveloped but pupils spoken to by inspectors did know their own targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children relate well to adults and to one another and benefit from many opportunities to make choices, be responsible and autonomous. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefit greatly from a system of 'Friends of the School' where they vote for their peers to take a role in helping the school to improve as well as being available to support fellow pupils at break and lunchtime periods. Likewise, a system of 'Sports Leaders' gives children good opportunities to help set up activities for the benefit of others.

Across lessons, break times and lunchtimes, all staff were observed to have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This is reinforced by messages on display boards and corridor walls about treating one another with respect and messages such as 'Do you remember to say...?'. The impact of this was noticed by an inspector when two Year 2 boys spotted the visitor distant along the corridor. They were heard to say to one another, 'remember – smile' and as they passed by, they gave their best effort at a broad smile to the inspector.

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good and the school rewards full attendance through certificates. Pupils overwhelmingly say that they feel safe in the school and that disruptions due to poor behaviour are minimal. Parents and carers raised few concerns about behaviour and inspectors observed that limited, low level disruption was more likely in the very few lessons where teaching was satisfactory. When moving about the school or playing outdoors, pupils were observed to cooperate well with one another and to respect given boundaries of acceptable conduct. Pupils understand about different types of bullying and how to raise their concerns with staff. School records show that there are no exclusions and that behaviour over time is typically good. Pupils with specific behavioural needs are well managed by staff.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads with clear vision and a firm sense of moving the school forward through calmly and carefully planned change. She is reflective and keen to learn. As a result, staff welcome the challenges of continuously working to improve learning and teaching and the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The school's good capacity to improve is indicated by clear plans for ongoing improvement and rigorous systems for monitoring pupil progress and staff performance. The headteacher has given much attention to building leadership roles for staff. Consequently, leaders at all levels are actively engaged in staff development and collaborative learning as a vehicle for improvement. For example, training in using the outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage has made this aspect of provision a strength of the school.

The governing body shares a clear view of the school's strengths and priorities and is becoming a very effective sounding board for the headteacher. It has helped to ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

Across the school, the curriculum is broad and balanced and well matched to pupils' needs. This is because of the whole-staff focus upon curriculum development and improving how story, visits and celebrations are a key vehicle for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These aspects make a significant contribution to pupils' positive experiences and enjoyment at the school. The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully and each child and family is treated as unique. Children are helped regularly to think about similarities and differences between people through very effective class and school discussions and celebrations.

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School, Warrington, WA4 3DB

We visited your school on 27 and 28 June and I am writing to tell you what we found out.

I am glad to say that The Cobbs Infant and Nursery School is a good school. Talking to you was very helpful and we watched many of your lessons and listened to some of you read. As soon as we arrived, we were impressed that your school is very clean and well looked after. We really liked the many places that you are able to learn and play indoors and outdoors and the Nursery outdoor area is fabulous.

When we watched your lessons, we saw that you behave well and listen to your teachers. Most of the lessons that we saw were good and some were outstanding. To help your teachers we have asked them to make even more of your lessons like the best ones that we saw. You can help by telling your teachers what lessons that you find most interesting and why. We particularly liked the Year 2 mathematics lesson about coordinates and directional language because we saw how active and enthusiastic you were. We also liked the Reception class dance lesson where you were helping each other to review performances.

One of the things that your school does well is helping you to become confident in reading, writing and in mathematics. We were very pleased to see that the book collections in each of your classrooms are really attractive. Some of your phonics lessons looked very enjoyable. The phonics lesson that we most wanted to be part of was in Year 1 where you were all in teams to play 'Who wants to be a millionaire?'.

We were very pleased to see that you act responsibly in school and you told us about the system of 'friends of the school' and 'sports leaders'. We were also pleased that the school offers you lots of extra opportunities like gardening club and that the school tells you about the local birds and wildlife.

Your parents must be very proud of you and your school. Keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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