



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Spinney Hill Primary and Community Centre

City of Leicester Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 23-24 June 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

© Crown copyright 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the school	iv
Introduction	1
Main findings	1
Key issues	3
Inspection findings	3
Standards achieved by the pupils	3
The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	5
The quality of education	5
Leadership and management	7
Implementation of the action plan	8
Appendix – Information about the inspection	9

Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Spinney Hill Primary and Community Centre
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr M Stokes
Address of school:	Ventnor Street Leicester Leicestershire LE5 5EZ
Telephone:	0116 273 7047
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr B Bhamra
Local education authority area:	City of Leicester
Unique reference number:	120084
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr C V Chauhan HMI
Dates of inspection:	23-24 June 2004

Introduction

1. Spinney Hill Primary and Community Centre is situated in Leicester. It is much bigger than most primary schools, with 644 pupils on roll. Almost all the pupils come from homes where English is not their first language. The majority of the pupils are Muslim and the main languages spoken are Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali. The pupils live nearby in late-Victorian terraced housing and the area suffers from relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The proportion of the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average but this does not fully reflect low incomes in the area. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is in line with the national average. Eight pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and this is similar to the national picture. The school is experiencing a high level of pupil mobility. In the current school year, 96 pupils joined at various times and 62 left. This accounts for about one quarter of the school's total population. The school admits pupils from the age of three in the Foundation Stage and they progress to the reception class or Year 1. The pupils' attainment on entry is below average, with significant numbers entering the Foundation Stage with little use of English.

2. The school was inspected in January 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of January 2001. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on eight occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In June 2004 three HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2001.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- from a low starting point in the Foundation Stage, the pupils make sound progress across the school because of improved teaching and learning. Standards have risen in some subjects but the pupils' overall attainment is below the expectations for their ages. In the Key Stage 1 national tests for 2003, the results in reading and writing improved considerably from the previous year. In Key Stage 2, the 2003 results in science were above the average when compared with schools in similar circumstances. On the whole, however, standards are below, or well below, national averages;
 - the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are significant strengths of the school. The pupils were well behaved in their lessons; they worked well with others and sustained their concentration on the tasks set. They were punctual to school in
-

the mornings and wasted very little time in settling down to their work. Attendance for the current school year is 91.6 per cent, which is well below the national figure. The school reports this would be higher by about two per cent if some pupils did not go abroad for extended periods;

- provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. Assemblies promote the school as a well-ordered community and they recognise and celebrate the beliefs of the different faiths represented. Relationships are very good. The school offers a good range of extracurricular activities that are supported well by the pupils and their parents;
- the quality of teaching has improved considerably, especially over the last six months. All the lessons were at least satisfactory, including ten lessons that were good and four that were very good. The best lessons were planned in detail and provided strong stimulus and appropriate challenge for all the pupils. They developed the pupils' conceptual understanding well; for example, in the Foundation Stage and in English, and helped them with their subject vocabulary. The pace to the pupils' learning was good and the teachers had a good knowledge of the pupils' prior attainment. Oral feedback to the pupils was helpful and showed them how to improve their work. However, there were some important weaknesses in some of the teaching. In such cases, the teachers did not engage the pupils consistently, there were shortcomings in classroom management, and the teachers' subject knowledge was insecure, such as in geography;
- the curriculum is broad and generally meets requirements. The school is planning to extend the taught time from September 2004 because it does not currently meet the minimum recommended nationally. Assessment procedures are developing well and they are enabling the better setting of targets for individual pupils. The marking of the pupils' work is consistently good;
- the headteacher is dedicated and works hard on behalf of the school. His leadership has become incisive and he has tackled well some longstanding weaknesses in the teaching. He has ensured that senior and middle managers have become active in school improvement and they are held accountable for provision in their areas. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are generally thorough and key managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. However, much more work remains to be done. There is still too much variability in the teaching, and the monitoring of the curriculum in the foundation subjects is a weakness. The school is due to lose some important managers soon and it is at a critical stage in its future development;
- the governing body continues to be involved in the life of the school. Some governors, including the chairman, work very hard on its behalf. The governing body is developing its understanding of the school and is holding it more to account. However, its systems and procedures are not yet fully robust. It relies too much on the commitment of particular individuals;

- the local education authority (LEA) has provided high levels of appropriate support to the school more recently. Its greater involvement over the last six months has had a beneficial effect on the school.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science;
- strengthen management structures and ensure that monitoring and evaluation procedures are systematic and rigorous;
- continue to improve the teaching so that it is consistent and more effective throughout the school.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. From a low base, the pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress as a result of an appropriate curriculum and some good and very good teaching. They develop a secure basic grounding in literacy. For example, some pupils know the difference between the use of singular and plural words, such as goose and geese, while others can readily name various animals and birds. Many hold pencils appropriately and a few write their names fairly accurately. Most are working well towards achieving the nationally set Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

8. The pupils make sound progress in literacy across Key Stage 1 but their attainment by Year 2 is below the national expectations for their ages. They write for a range of relevant purposes in different subjects. They have a satisfactory command of vocabulary and many have a sound understanding of grammatical conventions. They make good efforts to ensure their writing is legible and, although accuracy in spelling remains inconsistent, their attempts at words are usually plausible. In the national test results for 2003, the pupils' attainment in reading and writing improved considerably from the previous year but remained well below national averages. The results were in line with those achieved by schools in similar circumstances.

9. The sound progress made by the pupils in Key Stage 1 is maintained across Key Stage 2. Their written work has breadth and is well organised. This is complemented by a wide range of reading, including classical texts. The use of grammar and punctuation by the higher attaining pupils is usually accurate. The lower attaining pupils, however, often struggle with the proper use of English. Spelling is a general weakness across the ability range. Overall, by Year 6, the pupils' attainment is well below expectations. In 2003, the school's results in the national tests in English were very low compared with schools in similar circumstances.

10. In speaking and listening, the pupils in the main school organise their thoughts well. This enables them to communicate with clarity when describing what they have done or what they have found. However, some pupils cannot sufficiently extend their oral responses. Most pupils are attentive and have good listening skills.

11. In mathematics, standards are rising although the pupils' progress is uneven and their overall attainment is below the levels expected for their ages. In the Foundation Stage, the pupils make a good start through basic experiences of number, shape and measurement; for example, in exploring heavier and lighter objects, and in starting to use mathematical language and skills in arranging and shaping materials. In Key Stage 1, the pupils make further progress on the required range of topics including number operations, money, capacity, and handling data. In some lessons, the pupils showed attainment similar to that expected, for example, when using number operations. Overall, however, variations in the quality of teaching restrict the progress of pupils from year to year in understanding important concepts such as place value. In recent National Curriculum tests, relatively few of the pupils exceeded the target Level 2.

12. In Key Stage 2, the pupils make further progress and many showed appropriate attainment in recent tests. The pupils in a Year 4 class, for example, explained their well-informed use of fractions in a variety of calculations. In Year 5, the higher attaining pupils employed sound ideas and methods of working with factors when multiplying two and three-digit numbers, but failed to use specific mathematical terms when attempting to describe complex three-dimensional shapes. The pupils in Year 6 are helped in preparation for the national tests. In recent years, the school's results from these tests have been below those from other schools and the attainment of girls has been lower than that of the boys. The progress made by the pupils in lessons varies, leading to significant underachievement in mathematics. Steps are being taken to enhance the pupils' progress and to strengthen the curriculum and teaching of areas in which pupils' attainment has been particularly low; for example, in solving problems.

13. In science, the youngest pupils are improving their skills of prediction; for instance, in the measurement of fluids. In Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the growth of plants, minibeasts, forces and sound. A Year 1 class showed considerable interest in learning about the parts of plants, with good speculation and recording in their practical explorations of roots. The attainment of the pupils, however, is below age-related expectations. In Key Stage 2, the pupils make sound progress in topics such as classification, the solar system, food chains and changing materials. In Year 5, some of the pupils had an appropriate understanding of the characteristics of solids, liquids and gases. The pupils in Year 6 made rapid progress when using a computer and a sensor to compare the effectiveness of different sunglasses. The performance of the pupils in recent National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 has been generally low. However, there was a significant improvement in the results in 2003 and the school's performance was above average when compared with others in similar circumstances. Substantial proportions of the pupils also achieved or exceeded the nationally expected Level 4.

14. The more systematic development of information and communication technology (ICT) has led to greater teacher confidence in using a good range of ICT resources. The pupils in Key Stage 2 show good levels of skill in control technology and in collecting data. They use spreadsheets to calculate quantities and to present data graphically including, for instance, the results of scientific investigations. The pupils' achievements are used well by

the teachers to develop different approaches to teaching and learning. Word processing is used sensibly given that the pupils' handwriting is generally underdeveloped. The integration of ICT across different subjects remains limited.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. Assemblies promote the school as a well-ordered community. They recognise and celebrate the different faith communities represented and allow the pupils to reflect on their beliefs. The pupils consider issues of right and wrong and they have a strong sense of justice. They regularly raise money for charities. Relationships are very good.

16. The school offers a good range of extracurricular activities that are supported well by the pupils and their parents. These include after-school clubs in, for example, homework, Asian art, Asian dance, athletics and, unusually, philosophy. In addition, there are external activities for the gifted and talented pupils, for instance with Leicester City Tigers. Clubs and activities are well attended and two pupils have recently competed in the athletics county championships. Older pupils are taken on residential visits, which they thoroughly enjoy.

17. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are significant strengths of the school. They were satisfactory or better in all lessons, including 13 lessons where they were good and seven lessons where they were very good. The pupils were well behaved. They conscientiously followed instructions from the staff and worked well with others. They were diligent in lessons and sustained their concentration on the tasks set. The pupils were friendly and welcoming, and they were aware of routines and expectations in the classrooms. Around the school, the pupils moved in an orderly and calm manner, with little adult supervision.

18. For the current school year, attendance stands at 91.6 per cent, which is well below the national figure. The school reports this would be about two per cent higher if some pupils did not go abroad for extended periods. The pupils were punctual to school in the mornings. They settled down to their lessons very quickly and came prepared to learn. Very little time was wasted at the start of the day.

The quality of education

19. The quality of teaching is sound. It was at least satisfactory in all the lessons inspected, including ten where it was good and another four where it was very good. In the main, there is engaging and secure teaching of the core subjects. The staff are increasingly sharing their knowledge and projecting their enthusiasm in lessons across the foundation subjects. At their best, lessons provided strong stimulus and challenges for the pupils; for example, in a Foundation Stage lesson that encouraged the youngest pupils to observe, describe, compare and predict before measuring the capacity of jugs. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson on factors, the teacher paid good attention to the accuracy of measurement and how to analyse methods of working. Good questioning skills were used to provoke thought about the relationships of the different operations and the use of brackets which helped to build the pupils' conceptual vocabulary. The pace to the learning was good and the teacher had a good knowledge of what the pupils were capable of because of careful and regular marking of their written work. The use of subject ideas was engaging but uncompromising, with relevant emphasis on factors, coordinates and axes.

20. There remains, nevertheless, some weaker teaching. In a small number of lessons, the teaching did not engage the pupils consistently or in sufficient depth. In a mathematics lesson, close adult support promoted steady progress for some of the pupils, while supervision of the remainder left too many individuals confused as their work lost pace. At times, the depth of the pupils' work was unhelpfully restricted by weaknesses in teachers' classroom management or knowledge of the subject, such as in geography.

21. Most lessons were planned in some detail and the staff drew on a good knowledge of teaching methods and learning styles to stimulate the pupils' interest and progress. Marking and other forms of response to the pupils' work were used well to provide encouragement and advice. The classrooms are mainly well planned within the limitations imposed by the school's accommodation. Many of the teachers have good control of their classes and this enabled them to set and maintain a sharp focus and a good pace of work. The pupils are encouraged in appropriate ways to continue their learning outside school through arrangements such as book bags, a home reading scheme, spelling lists and a club for older pupils. The use of homework is, however, underdeveloped. More generally, there were times in some classes when the work provided for the school's more capable pupils was not sufficiently demanding to move their attainment to the higher levels that they could achieve.

22. The quality of learning closely matched that of the teaching. The pupils responded well to the better teaching. Many willingly answered questions in class discussions. Levels of motivation in some classes were high. The pupils developed their knowledge and understanding briskly in some classes. Where the learning was weaker, the teachers had not sufficiently varied the work for the different abilities; for example, in group reading, where the needs of the more fluent and competent readers were not always planned for.

23. The curriculum is broad and generally meets requirements. However, the school falls short of the minimum time recommended nationally for each key stage. The school has made changes for September 2004 which will see an increase in time for both key stages of 50 minutes per week. Senior and middle managers regularly monitor the planning, especially in the core subjects, to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the planning, especially in the foundation subjects, are not yet systematic or rigorous. Teachers' records, for example, are not routinely scrutinised to ensure the proper coverage of the foundation subjects. The school recognises that work remains to be done to improve the quality of monitoring in this aspect of the National Curriculum.

24. Assessment procedures are coherent and have been increasingly used to plan for improved teaching and learning. Developments in literacy have emphasised the establishment of precise targets for the teachers' planning as a consequence of the pupils' previous learning. As a result, the teachers are more confident about setting appropriate and realistic targets for individual pupils. The teachers readily measure the progress the pupils have made over specific periods of time, and common format for recording progress is being developed. The marking of the pupils' written work is consistently good. The pupils' efforts are not only valued but they are also challenged when expectations are not met. The teachers frequently provide good oral feedback to individual pupils to help them to improve their work.

Leadership and management

25. The headteacher is dedicated and works hard on behalf of the school. His leadership has become incisive and he has tackled well some longstanding weaknesses in the teaching. He has enabled other senior and middle managers to become better involved in this process. The quality of teaching and learning has consequently improved and these improvements have been sustained.

26. The two deputy headteachers have supported the headteacher well in ensuring that initiatives have been carried through. Much work has been done recently by the school on self-evaluation. As a result, senior, and some middle managers have a much deeper insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. The school's work on self-evaluation is being strengthened, and an appropriate and more rigorous model is to be implemented from September 2004. This model includes a more systematic gathering of views of all the school community, including the pupils. The key middle managers have been given greater responsibilities and they are undertaking these well. They have a much better understanding of their subjects across the school and they are beginning to make other staff more accountable for their teaching. However, further work on this remains to be done. There is still too much variability in the teaching, and the monitoring of the curriculum in the foundation subjects is a weakness.

27. The work of the senior managers has recently been strengthened by the temporary secondment of a deputy headteacher from a local school. She has been very effective in helping to improve the teaching and learning. The work of the middle managers has been enhanced by the regular use of an educational consultant from the LEA, who has been instrumental in improving the quality of work of the middle managers.

28. The school is at a critical stage in its development. A deputy headteacher and the co-ordinator for special educational needs are leaving in the summer. The temporary deputy headteacher is due to leave at Christmas; in addition to her teaching role, she is the co-ordinator for literacy. Some very important decisions have to be made about the school's future management structure, including roles and responsibilities, and lines of accountability. The school has a relatively large amount of funding that it has carried over from the previous financial year. Appropriate plans have been drawn up to use this money over the next two years.

29. The governing body continues to be involved in the life of the school and some governors, including the chairman, work very hard on its behalf. The chairman comes into school every week and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Some governors have assumed responsibilities for aspects of the school's provision. The nominated governors for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs, for example, have visited to gain a better understanding. The governing body is developing its role and is holding the school more to account. However, its systems and procedures are not yet robust. It relies too much on the commitment of certain individuals.

30. The LEA has provided higher levels of appropriate support to the school more recently. Its greater involvement over the last six months has had a beneficial effect on the school, especially in relation to improvements in the teaching and learning, and in the better leadership and management of the core subjects. It has also supported the headteacher well.

Implementation of the action plan

31. In its inspection report of 2001, the school had to address five key issues. These principally related to: improving leadership and management; improving the quality of teaching; raising standards, especially in English, mathematics and science; improving the curriculum, and ensuring that legal requirements for the teaching of religious education were met. The school has made reasonable progress and most of the tasks have been completed, although further work remains to be done, particularly in improving standards and in ensuring that management systems are more robust.

32. On the whole, the leadership and management have improved significantly, especially over the last year. The headteacher has ensured that the work of the senior and middle managers is more effective. He has been supported well by the LEA in this. Management structures, however, are not fully secure. In addition, some key staff are due to leave the school soon.

33. The quality of teaching has improved markedly. The planning of lessons is more detailed, the needs of the various abilities are usually accounted for and there is good feedback to the pupils on how to improve their work. Advisory staff from the LEA have been instrumental in improving the practice of the teachers. However, the quality of teaching is variable and there are some important weaknesses.

34. As a result of the improved teaching and learning, standards are gradually rising. From a low base, the pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and continue generally well as they get older. Overall, however, their standards are below national expectations.

35. The school complies with the legal requirements for religious education. Constructive links with external agencies and other schools have been established, and appropriate staff training for the implementation of the local agreed syllabus has been undertaken. The pupils' understanding of different faiths is being enhanced.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in October 2001, in February, June and November 2002, in February, June and November 2003, and in April 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2001.

In June 2004, three HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty two lessons or parts of lessons, an assembly and six registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2001 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.