



Inspection report

Newton Road Community Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 132780
LEA Northamptonshire

Inspection number 273645
Inspection dates 2 and 3 March 2005
Reporting inspector Mr C J Redman HMI

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.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Newton Road
School category	Community		Rushden
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Northamptonshire NN10 0HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01933 353761
Number on roll	219	Fax number	01933 359456
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs C Goodwin
Date of previous inspection	June 2003	Headteacher	Mr A Sears

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	14 April 2005	273645

Introduction

When Newton Road Community Primary School was inspected in June 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2005.

Description of the school

Newton Road Community Primary School serves an area in Rushden, Northamptonshire that is socially mixed with some significant disadvantage. There are 219 pupils aged 4 to 11 years, typical of the size of other primary schools. About 18 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, broadly in line with the national average. A low proportion (1.8 per cent) of the pupils speaks English as an additional language. Almost a third (32 per cent) of the pupils has been identified by the school as having special educational needs and a higher than usual proportion (3.7 per cent) has Statements of Special Educational Need. The number of staff is high for the size of the school so that class sizes are relatively small.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

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.

Newton Road Community Primary School has improved significantly over the past six months. Insightful and determined leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and hard work by the staff were key factors that enabled the school to address successfully the ineffective teaching methods and poor behaviour that once existed. The school is now providing a sound education for its pupils. Standards are well below those found nationally, but they are improving across the school. The teaching has improved significantly; most is at least satisfactory and often it is better, but the quality is uneven and very occasionally the teaching is unsatisfactory. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is good. The pupils' behaviour is mostly satisfactory and often good, but a small number of the pupils present particularly challenging behaviour. Assessment is good and is starting to be used well to improve the pupils' rate of progress. The curriculum is broad and balanced; it is supplemented by a suitable range of extracurricular activities as well as educational trips and visitors to the school.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of June 2003 required the school to address key areas of weakness concerned with improving: the standards the pupils achieved, particularly in English, mathematics and science; the quality of teaching and the behaviour of the pupils; the curriculum and resources for its delivery; and attendance. Standards have improved in response to much better teaching, but they are still well below what is typical for the age group. Behaviour has improved markedly and this has helped the pupils' attitudes to learning also improve; as a result the pupils are making better progress. However, their weak learning skills mean that progress is not yet good enough. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is generally suitably resourced; however, too many of the teachers and pupils do not have easy access to suitable information and communication technology (ICT) resources, and the facilities for physical education are barely satisfactory for the older pupils. Attendance has improved and unauthorised absence is below the national average.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to improve. There are good monitoring systems to evaluate the school's educational provision and each pupil's progress is tracked through regular assessments. The resulting information is analysed effectively and has been used well to improve teaching and to help those pupils not making adequate progress. The quality of subject co-ordination is good in the core subjects and improving in the foundation subjects. The staff work well together and are implementing teaching and learning strategies that are raising standards across the curriculum. The local education authority (LEA) has undertaken to continue to monitor closely the school's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However, the key priorities are to:

- improve the standards achieved by the pupils;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching by eradicating the small proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory and increasing the proportion of good teaching;
- improve the quality of learning so that the pupils make quicker progress;
- continue to improve the provision for using ICT across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Standards have improved noticeably since September 2004, but they are still too low. On entry to the Foundation Stage, levels of attainment vary widely, but are mostly below those typical of the pupils' age. The pupils make sound progress; their personal and social development is good, they understand classroom routines and settle quickly to their tasks.

The results of national tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 generally improved in 2004 compared with the previous year. This was most marked in Key Stage 2 where the proportion of the pupils achieving the expected Levels 4 or 5 rose by 31 per cent in English, 10 per cent in mathematics and 3 per cent in science. In Key Stage 1, the 2004 writing results improved significantly, but the results for mathematics increased only slightly and the standards in reading fell. Standards at the end of both key stages were low compared with other schools nationally. The progress made by the Year 6 pupils during Key Stage 2 was poor compared with schools where the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was similar. Currently, the pupils' progress throughout the school is sound and occasionally good.

Standards in English are low overall. The pupils' listening skills are mostly satisfactory, but their limited vocabulary affects their speaking skills so that many are hesitant when speaking and rarely use extended sentences. Few of the pupils read with the fluency expected for their age. Writing, including presentation, is improving but remains weak. Grammatical accuracy and spelling are well below the standards normal for the pupils' ages.

Standards in mathematics have improved, but too many of the pupils work below the levels expected for their age. A few of the pupils calculate accurately, have a quick recall of basic number facts, a good understanding of measurement and handle data effectively, but they are less successful in applying their knowledge to solve practical problems. Many of the pupils have not achieved average standards, make errors in calculations too frequently and find difficulty using mathematical facts to solve straightforward problems. The quality of graphical work is poor.

Standards in science are improving, especially for the older pupils. However, too few of the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of scientific facts, and their ability to experiment and investigate is weak.

Personal development

When the school became subject to special measures in 2003, the pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour were poor. As a result of better provision, higher expectations and more consistent approaches by teachers to classroom management, the pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour have improved significantly. Far more of the pupils now demonstrate an eagerness to learn, although a minority remain too passive in lessons. In only a small proportion of lessons was the behaviour unsatisfactory, a marked improvement since June 2003. Good classroom management and good relationships create many opportunities for the pupils to work together in pairs or small groups, and most use these opportunities well. The pupils usually settle down to their independent work quickly and sensibly. Exclusions are still too high; however, almost three quarters of these involve only three pupils who present significant behavioural problems. Attendance has risen and is now normal for primary schools. Unauthorised absence is low.

The provision for developing the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The quality of the assemblies was good and fully complied with statutory requirements. The pupils' spiritual, social and moral development were enhanced by all of the pupils 'signing' during the hymn singing so that two hearing impaired pupils could be actively included. Teachers use occasions such as assembly well to reinforce good moral and social skills and to extend the pupils' cultural understanding. The school council is involving the pupils more in making decisions about their school. Teaching about other cultures and religions is integrated well into the curriculum.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved markedly since June 2003. At that time, only three quarters of the teaching was at least satisfactory and less than 40 per cent was good or very good. Now, nearly all of the teaching is at least satisfactory; the proportion that is good or better has increased slightly to almost half. The quality of teaching varied between key stages. In the Foundation Stage it was satisfactory but with insufficient good teaching; in Key Stage 1 it varied between good and unsatisfactory, but was sound overall; in Key Stage 2 all of the teaching was at least satisfactory and two thirds was good or very good.

In most parts of the school, the pupils are making faster progress because they are receiving better teaching. However, their weak literacy and numeracy skills restrict their progress so that it was good in only a fifth of the lessons.

All lessons were well planned. A good variety of suitable activities was usually included to ensure that the pupils were fully involved in learning. The challenge of the work was carefully matched to the previous attainment of the pupils. The quality of exposition was

mostly good, but occasionally it was not sufficiently interesting to hold the pupils' attention. Questioning was mostly good and actively involved all of the pupils. Management of the pupils' behaviour has improved significantly and nearly all of the teachers have established a good learning ethos in lessons. Marking was regular and mostly of good quality.

A suitable system for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress is in place. The evidence from this information is carefully analysed and used to help with lesson planning, setting the pupils' targets in English, mathematics and science and providing booster lessons for some pupils who are not making adequate progress.

The curriculum is broad and balanced to satisfy national requirements. A curriculum map has helped improve subject planning and ensure better progression through units of work. Most lessons are suitably resourced so that the pupils experience a sound balance of practical and theoretical work. The equipment for teaching ICT is more plentiful; however, there is still not enough to enable its integration into all of the lessons that would benefit from it.

The provision for special educational needs is good and has been a significant factor in raising standards and improving behaviour. There are appropriate systems in place to identify and address the specific needs of these pupils. In lessons, good attention is paid to pupils' individual targets. The 'Rainbow Room', a special provision for a small group of pupils whose behaviour is particularly challenging, is well managed and effectively improving the behaviour of these pupils.

Parts of the school have been refurbished so that they are more appropriate for the teaching and learning styles required. However, provision for physical education is in a small hall that can easily accommodate the younger pupils but is too restricted for older pupils.

Due regard is paid to the pupils' safety, health and well-being. Two teachers are trained as designated teachers for children at risk, appropriate for the social context in which the school works. The pupils are confident to turn to adults for help in lessons or at playtime. A suitable range of equipment enables the pupils to socialise at playtime. Appropriate risk assessments are made before visits or journeys are made out of school. The school is part of the Schools Sports initiative to encourage healthy living.

Leadership and management

The headteacher was recently promoted from the post of deputy headteacher. He accepted the additional responsibilities of headship about a year ago to cover the sick leave of his predecessor, who subsequently resigned. In the short time he has been in post, he has led a remarkable improvement in the quality of educational provision. Under his leadership, the staff work more effectively together; this has led to greater cohesion and consistency in the quality of teaching. Under his guidance, the quality of leadership and management throughout the school has improved rapidly. He has worked energetically, pragmatically and with considerable effectiveness so that the school now offers a sound education to its

pupils. He has improved communication with the parents, the local community and other schools. He has been ably supported by the deputy headteacher; they form a skilled management team that is reflective as well as proactive in bringing about improvements. They have a clear and appropriate vision for the school that is being increasingly shared by the staff.

Planning to address the main weaknesses identified in the June 2003 inspection has been good. Longer term strategic planning has been adversely affected by the uncertainty of the leadership of the school, but now that this is resolved, appropriate discussions are taking place to plan the continued improvement of the school's educational provision. Finances have been used wisely so that improvements have been achieved while maintaining a balanced budget.

Governance has improved and is now good. The newly constituted governing body is fully subscribed, including six parent governors. The governors are well led and have improved significantly their understanding of the quality of the education provided by the school. They monitor the school's work well. They are working hard to support improvements, as well as holding the school to account for its actions.

The LEA has played an important part in securing and improving provision at the school. It has monitored the school's progress effectively and provided help to improve teaching, learning, behaviour and management.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Newton Road Community Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in June 2003. 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 January, May and November 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of June 2003.

In March 2005, an HMI and an Additional Inspector 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.

During the inspection, 19 lessons and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was 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 June 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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