



Cunningham Hill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117279
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280031
Inspection dates 9 February 2006 to 10 February 2006
Reporting inspector Dr. Anna Coyle LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cell Barnes Lane
School category	Community		AL1 5QJ
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 857524
Number on roll	176	Fax number	01727 852609
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Margaret Edgar
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs. Margaret Leese

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 9 February 2006 - 10 February 2006	Inspection number 280031
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a popular school situated in St Albans. Most children are of White British background and a significant number are from different ethnic backgrounds. Several children learn English as an additional language and the main languages spoken at home are Bengali, Gujarati and Cantonese. A few children have learning difficulties and disabilities that include speech and communication difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural needs, and hearing impairment. A very small number have autistic difficulties or physical disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstandingly effective school in which every child really matters and all are highly valued as individuals. This shines through in everything the school does. It is a welcoming, friendly place in which everyone feels cared for and fully involved. The inspection evidence concurs with the school's own evaluation of itself as outstanding, and the parents and children agree. It provides an excellent education for all of its children, who do exceedingly well as a result of the highly competent teaching and excellent thematic curriculum. From a fairly average starting point, children increase their skills rapidly due to the extremely high quality provision in the Foundation Stage. They make excellent progress in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 so that achievement is outstanding by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1. Standards have been well above the national averages in the tests for reading, writing and mathematics for many years, and continue to be so. Standards of behaviour are exemplary. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to school because the adults make sure that they have lots of exciting activities to inspire, motivate and enthral them. The staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support for them within a very loving, kindly ethos where trust and mutual respect thrive. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and very keen for their children to attend. The school gives excellent value for money and is exceedingly well placed to make further improvements. This is because the dynamic headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has been a key factor in ensuring that the school has improved considerably since the last inspection. She is supported conscientiously by her superb deputy, a highly dedicated team of good natured staff and a very efficient governing body. They all know how good the school is because the systems for evaluating its work are very firmly established. Together, they constantly strive for excellence.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for the school to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics by the time children reach the end of Year 2. Standards have remained extremely high for many years and are currently much better than the national picture, particularly at the higher levels. Children make exceptional progress from the time they enter the school until they leave. They begin in the Reception classes with similar skills to most children of their age and build very rapidly as they move through the school. This is because the staff put outstanding emphasis on increasing children's independent skills, first and foremost, so that they quickly become eager to learn and self-motivated. In Years 1 and 2, children work incredibly hard to achieve the challenging targets that are set for them and the most capable do especially well. Gifted and talented children excel academically and creatively. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities also achieve very well

because they are given plenty of exciting challenges and are closely supported by teaching assistants to help them reach for the stars. Children who learn English as an additional language do very well because the school makes very good use of additional staff to provide prompt and highly focused guidance for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary and attendance is above average. Children take responsibility for helping each other and show unusually high levels of care towards their peers. Because of the school's emphasis upon developing children's sense of independence and responsibility, they are exceedingly confident and very articulate in telling visitors how good the school is, in their eyes. They praise the teachers, support staff and lunchtime supervisors for looking after them and helping them to learn and feel safe. As they get older, children take an increasing role in helping to manage different aspects of their play and learning. Children lead healthy lifestyles with plenty of energetic activity through the curriculum and at break times. They enjoy fruit for snacks and a wide selection of healthy lunches which keep them fresh and alert. The very good literacy, numeracy and social skills they acquire prepare them very well for the next stage of schooling, their future economic well-being and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Learning is fun. This is because the quality of teaching is outstanding. The pace of lessons is lively and teachers use a very wide range of exciting teaching methods and resources to capture children's interests and enthral them. Outstanding teaching impacts significantly on learning so that children make excellent progress because they are exceptionally well motivated and very keen to learn. Children respond very positively to teachers' skilful questioning and actively participate during discussions and practical or creative activities. They have excellent, trusting relationships with staff and each another because all adults make them feel highly valued and well loved. Teachers are excellent role models for the children and promote exceedingly high levels of courtesy, good manners and mutual respect amongst them. They make extremely good use of formal assessment procedures to check on children's learning and guide their planning. This means that the work they provide for the children is exceptionally well matched to their needs, whether they are gifted and talented or have language needs or learning difficulties. As a result of all of these outstanding features, the school is a very happy, caring place in which all children and staff truly thrive. This shines through in everything they do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The learning activities provided are outstanding throughout the school because of the way in which they fully meet the needs of all children. The children's clear love of learning is built up through carefully planned thematic activities that exploit natural links between subjects, which helps them to learn rapidly. The school ensures that the best features of the Reception class planning are continued into the early stages of Year 1 which leads to a seamless transition in children's learning. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are exceptionally well provided for, as are the small number of children who do not speak English at home. The provision for gifted and talented children has been developed significantly since the last inspection, and is now exceedingly well organised. The arrangements for children's personal and social education are exceptional, and strategies to encourage the safety and well-being of children have been carefully woven into the curriculum. The school has introduced a broad range of extra activities and these are having a very positive impact on the confidence children develop and the pace at which they learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff are thoroughly committed to the children and demonstrate exceptionally high levels of care. The support and guidance they provide is comprehensive, and is outstanding in the impact that it has on children's personal and academic development. Rigorous child protection procedures and risk assessments are implemented very effectively, and ensure that children always learn in a safe environment. Children reach challenging academic targets and their views are regularly sought and acted upon. The school has very good relationships with parents and other agencies, and all groups work together well as a team to ensure that learners make good progress. Children learn about their rights and responsibilities and know how to get help and advice when they need it. They are proud of the responsibilities they are given and take their duties very seriously. This makes a very strong contribution to their personal development and well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides dynamic and outstanding leadership. She has successfully led and managed the school since the last inspection and is very well supported by the staff. Her exceptional commitment and good nature help to encourage an excellent ethos for children's learning. The conscientious deputy and highly committed staff work in tremendous harmony with the headteacher and each other to make sure that they all keep the best interests of the children at the forefront of everything they do. They provide extremely well for all children and make sure that they have equal opportunities to participate in every activity. As regular visitors, the governors contribute energetically to the life of the school and are constantly seeking new ways

to improve it. Highly effective self-evaluation procedures are firmly established. The school knows itself exceedingly well and regularly consults the governors, staff, children and parents to take account of their views. The extensive school development plan is used rigorously to highlight the school's priorities for improvement, and the governors have successfully dealt with the issues arising from the previous inspection. The outstanding teamwork and superb focus on children's learning puts the school in an excellent position to go on improving further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at the work that you were doing. We think that you go to an excellent school where the teachers are very kind, loving and helpful. They take extremely good care of you and encourage you to take care of each other. Your behaviour is excellent. You have plenty of exciting things to do in lessons and lots of activities at break times and after school. We know that you eat healthily and have fresh fruit for snacks and a wide selection of scrummy lunches. You told us that you love coming to school and that you enjoy learning because the teachers and teaching assistants are so friendly and happy, and we agree with you. The teaching is excellent. All of the adults work very hard to make sure that lessons are fun. This means that you make excellent progress and do extremely well so that you achieve very high standards in the tests you take in Year 2. The headteacher is outstanding. She works very hard with the deputy and the governors so that you can learn in a lively and exciting place. Because you go to such an excellent school, there is very little that we could find that could be better, and we know that everyone tries really hard to make things better for you all the time. We hope that you will continue to enjoy your school as much as you do now.