



The Avenue Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121871
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281120
Inspection dates 12 June 2006 to 13 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Capper AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	The Avenue
School category	Community		Wellingborough
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Northamptonshire NN8 4ET
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01933 276366
Number on roll	179	Fax number	01933 224414
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs G M Thomas-Hancock

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a mixed area of Wellingborough. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average. The number has increased since the last inspection and children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is now well below average. There is a high proportion of pupils in Year 2 who have been identified as having behavioural problems, some of whom are new to the school this year. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high, with a significant proportion of these pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Most of these pupils speak Gujarati or Bengali.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides well for all of its pupils. It is very inclusive and successfully promotes a strong sense of community amongst pupils and parents. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and there is a good curriculum that makes learning purposeful. Provision in the Reception Year is good and children make good progress. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Teachers make learning fun, helping to ensure that there are good levels of enjoyment in lessons. This means that pupils develop good attitudes towards learning. The well-established routines in the Reception classes and Year 1 help pupils to develop especially good independence. Teachers assess learning carefully and use this information to plan work that generally meets differing needs well. Occasionally in different subjects there is not enough challenge for more-able pupils, because they are sometimes given exactly the same piece of work as other pupils. Good quality support for pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language helps them to make good gains in their understanding and use of English. Pupils' personal development is good. Working within the school's calm and welcoming atmosphere, pupils quickly develop good social skills and grow in confidence and self-esteem. The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and helps them to develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Pupils' behaviour is good overall, even though the school welcomes a relatively high number of pupils with challenging behaviour. However, teachers manage behaviour well. Skilled support staff make a very valuable contribution to learning, especially in the way that they help the pupils who have difficulties with concentrating or understanding what they have to do.

Leadership and management are good. Senior managers and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They responded quickly to problems with the challenging behaviour of some pupils in Year 2 at the start of the year, helping to minimise the impact on achievement. There is a wide range of procedures for assessing pupils' learning but the school does not make enough use of this information to systematically set targets or to check on progress over time. This makes it difficult for the school to identify pupils who are making particularly fast or slow progress and to take action if needed. The headteacher's high aspirations for the school and pupils are shared by all members of staff. There is a strong drive for improvement and the school has successfully dealt with the weaknesses from the last inspection. The school is in a good position to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is good challenge for more-able pupils at all times.
- Make better use of information about how well pupils are doing to set targets and check progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Children make good progress in the Reception classes, though by the time they start Year 1, standards are still lower than those found nationally. Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. Standards for the current Year 2 pupils are also broadly average, although there are fewer higher-attaining pupils than in 2005. This is due to some extent to the capabilities of pupils in the different year groups, but is also because of the slower progress of some more-able pupils in the current year. Pupils in the early stages of learning to speak English make good progress and quickly improve their understanding and use of everyday language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to work hard and to do their very best. They enjoy coming to school and the majority behave well at all times. Although some of the oldest pupils have significant behavioural difficulties, this is managed well. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to school life and playtime 'buddies' help to ensure that everyone feels included. Pupils understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and enjoy nutritious snacks in school every day. Playtimes are harmonious despite the lack of outdoor space which means that the pupils cannot always run around as much as they would like. Pupils' good progress in developing basic skills, combined with their growing personal and social confidence, prepares them well for the move to junior schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and this is a key factor in pupils' good achievement. Teachers make good links between different subjects, helping to make learning purposeful. Well-established routines in the Reception Year have a good effect on children's personal and social development, especially in the way that they learn to be independent. Throughout the school, relationships are very good and adults work together very effectively to manage pupils' behaviour, even when it is challenging. Consequently, there is a good pace to learning in most lessons. Teachers generally have good expectations of what pupils should achieve and are usually successful at meeting their differing needs. However, there are occasions when there is not enough challenge for the most able pupils, particularly when they are given exactly the same piece of work as other pupils. There is a very high number of support staff, especially in Year 2, giving very effective support to pupils. Pupils with English as an additional

language have their needs met well, with bilingual support staff and adult helpers making a good contribution to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good curriculum meets pupils' needs well. In the Reception Year, the abundance of first-hand practical experiences enables children to make good progress from the moment they arrive. In Years 1 and 2, pupils benefit from the strong emphasis placed on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum effectively supports pupils' personal development. Pupils are helped to develop an understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise through activities such as 'Healthy Living Days.'

Throughout the school, visits and visitors are a highlight for many pupils. These extend their experience of the wider world and help to bring subjects alive. For example, work in geography, science and religious education is extended when pupils visit the local market, a country park and a Hindu temple. The range of extra-curricular activities is relatively limited, even for an infant school. Some after-school clubs were discontinued because too few pupils wanted to take part at that time, but the school does not offer any clubs at other times and this is a missed opportunity to enrich learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All members of staff place great value upon each individual and regard their welfare as a top priority. Staff know the pupils and their families very well and are especially successful in offering support for those with limited spoken English or those who have behavioural difficulties. Parents rightly speak warmly of the care provided and really appreciate the way teachers help their children to make good progress in their work. There are good systems for helping children to settle quickly when they start school in the Reception classes and to prepare for the move to junior schools.

Teachers thoroughly assess pupils' work and generally use this information well to meet pupils' needs. This is most effective in English and mathematics, though even in these subjects more needs to be done to ensure that this information is used to plan consistently challenging work for the most able pupils. The quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. Good liaison with external agencies ensures that pupils receive specialist help and support as and when the need arises.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an excellent role model in her passion for ensuring that the school provides successfully for all pupils, whatever their academic or social need. The drive, commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher, senior managers and governors are

having a positive effect on achievement. For example, a recent focus on speaking and listening has helped to improve pupils' skills in exploring their ideas and talking about what they have been doing.

Senior managers review the school's work effectively and fully involve parents and pupils through an annual questionnaire. Consequently, senior managers and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is reflected in the effective way that the school responded to behaviour problems in Year 2 at the start of the year in order to reduce the impact on learning. The school has a substantial amount of information about how well pupils are doing. However, senior managers make insufficient use of this information to systematically review the progress pupils make over time or to set year-on-year targets for individual pupils to achieve. This makes it difficult to identify as soon as they arise any variations in progress in different subjects or for different groups of pupils.

Governors play a key role in the leadership of the school, especially in supporting senior managers in ensuring that funding is used to good effect. Senior managers and governors have a very clear vision for the school. Their high aspirations have ensured that there is a professional and reflective culture in school, with staff and governors sharing a common purpose that puts the interests of the pupils first. The school is moving forward quickly and is well placed to improve 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?	2	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly.

What we liked most about your school

You make good progress and learn things quickly.

You enjoy school and work hard in lessons.

Your teachers are very kind and caring and they look after you well.

Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

The headteacher, members of staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now

Make sure that work is always hard enough for you.

Use the information about how well you are doing to set you targets and make sure that you are always learning fast enough.

We thoroughly enjoyed listening and talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future.