



Cottesbrooke Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103280
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286615
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Type of school | Junior | School address | Cedars Avenue |
| School category | Community | | Birmingham |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 | | B27 6JL |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0121 4643178 |
| Number on roll (school) | 324 | Fax number | 0121 4643786 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Razia Hadait |
| | | Headteacher | Pearl Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 June 2006 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a culturally diverse but relatively disadvantaged area of Birmingham. A high proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many do not speak English as their first language, including some who are learning English for the first time. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement, especially in mathematics.

The school's effectiveness is inadequate because achievement is inadequate and standards are below average, when they should be at least average. The school has had a history of underachievement which has only been tackled effectively in the past 18 months or so. Although there are now clear signs of improvement, there is still a long way to go. The satisfactory teaching and curriculum now meet the needs of most pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are now making satisfactory progress, because they receive a good level of individual support. Pupils in Year 6 have made up the ground lost in English, but this is not yet the case in other years. Pupils are catching up, but the legacy of past underachievement remains. The situation is slightly worse in mathematics, where no class has yet caught up, although pupils are making up ground lost previously. Middle attainers are falling further behind in mathematics because they are not moved on quickly enough in lessons. The work frequently demands too little of them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They get on well together, irrespective of their backgrounds, and have a good understanding of what it means to be part of a community. Pupils receive a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support. They are well looked after, with particularly good procedures for ensuring the school is as safe as possible.

The school's managers have shown that they have the ability to get the school moving in the right direction again. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers get a clear picture of the main strengths and weaknesses in English and mathematics, but not enough attention is paid to analysing pupils' performance in science or to the achievements of different groups in the school. This means the school cannot guarantee that improvements are always targeted where they are most urgently needed. The school's evaluation of its own performance is over generous, because too much faith is placed in actions being taken, without waiting to see if they really are successful in improving standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers set suitably challenging tasks for all groups of pupils and increase the amount learnt in lessons.
- Focus firmly on improving achievement by more rigorously analysing pupils' performance, particularly in science and for different groups of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils start school with standards that are average. By the time they leave, their standards are below average and they have underachieved. Pupils have been underachieving at the school for several years. Each year they were at the school their standards would get a bit lower, because they were not making enough progress during the year. Things changed in September 2005, when most classes began to improve their performance and started to make up the ground lost in the past. However, the improvement was not enough to prevent the Year 6 pupils leaving with standards that were much lower than they should have been. Pupils currently in Year 6 have now caught up in English, but standards are still too low in mathematics. A similar situation exists in other classes. Pupils are catching up in English, but still have a way to go to overcome past underachievement. Standards in mathematics are not rising quickly enough. Middle attainers are still not making enough progress in mathematics.

Pupils who are learning English for the first time make satisfactory progress in their language development. Pupils with learning difficulties, however, make satisfactory progress because of good individual support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

There are a number of good features that contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. The school is a calm and orderly place and pupils understand the importance of safe practices such as keeping their football games to a designated area of the playground. Pupils have good relationships with the adults in the school and pupils from all ethnic groups mix well together. They make a good contribution to the community by taking on many responsibilities within the school and the wider community.

Because pupils have not made enough progress in their academic work they do not have the basic skills that are important for their future economic well-being. Although pupils know how to keep healthy and take plenty of exercise they do not always eat as healthily as they should. For example, many pupils bring crisps to school at break time and pupils can buy snacks such as cookies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are now learning at a satisfactory pace in lessons. Teachers manage their classes well and are rigorous in enforcing simple rules such as not shouting out, and listening when the teacher is talking. In some mathematics lessons, however, the teacher spends too long talking to the class, instead of getting them down to work on their own. When they do start work it is often not matched well enough to the needs of middle

attainers who are the majority in the class. In mathematics, the more able pupils are given more difficult work when they complete a task, and those with learning difficulties are given the support they need to make satisfactory progress. The middle attainers, on the other hand, are not moved on quickly enough when they have grasped the method that they are learning. Instead, they solve similar problems, but with different numbers, which they find too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is now planned in such a way that it meets the needs of most pupils. In English, less time is now allocated to each topic than previously. Now pupils cover more ground in a shorter time, so they can spend the extra time created in making up the work they have not covered in the past. In mathematics, on the other hand, there are weaknesses in planning the curriculum for the middle attaining pupils. Lower attainers are particularly well supported in Year 6, where an extra class has been created so that they can work on material more suitable for them. For the middle attainers, however, the curriculum as planned devotes too much time to practising calculations rather than learning new skills.

The good range of enrichment activities, including the popular after school clubs and sports activities, increases pupils' enjoyment of school and helps them understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a happy, friendly place in which positive relationships and good pastoral care help pupils grow as individuals. Staff place a high priority on providing a safe environment for the pupils. Child protection and adult vetting procedures are particularly thorough. Pupils are confident they can get help and advice if needed.

Pupils receive adequate feedback from teachers about how well they are doing with their work. However, in many cases pupils are not given a clear idea of how they can improve their work further. Most pupils feel that all they have to do is work harder or make their work neater.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

At the time of the last inspection pupils were achieving well. For the past four years, however, there have been indicators of widespread underachievement that still remain. Nevertheless, things are improving. The managers have demonstrated that they have the skills and drive to make the necessary improvements. The actions taken to improve the school's performance over the past 18 months are starting to bear fruit and pupils are making up some of the ground they have lost in the past. Good quality plans have been drawn up to further improve the school's provision. Actions have been effective

in most areas, but some weaknesses in teaching remain. This is partly because the checks on lessons are a bit too general and do not focus sufficiently on the most important aspects of teaching.

Better use of data and more rigorous monitoring have led to managers having a clearer picture of where the main weaknesses lie in English and mathematics. The tracking of pupils' progress in these subjects is very good, but little tracking takes place in science. Furthermore, not enough analysis of any differences in the achievement of different groups, such as boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, is carried out to enable the school to have a complete picture of its performance. As a result, the school is not yet necessarily able to focus actions for improvement where they are most needed.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 4 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for talking to us when we visited your school. You gave us a lot of help, which made our job much easier. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and we understand why. You all get on very well together. Your teachers take good care of you and make sure the school is a safe place. We were very impressed with how well you know how to keep safe and be healthy. Unfortunately, some of you do not always follow your own advice. You could help yourselves by not bringing crisps and sweets to eat at break time.

While you learn lots of new things at school, your school is not making sure that you make enough progress, and you particularly need to learn more in mathematics. Some of you are being given questions that are too easy, so we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are given work that is just hard enough to really make you think. Because mathematics is so important, we have told the school that someone will come and check that things are getting better in about a year's time. This is called a 'Notice to Improve'.

The headteacher and the other adults who run the school are making things better. You are catching up with the work you may have missed in the past. We were particularly impressed by the way you have already improved your writing. You are coming to school more often too. However, the people who run the school could still get a better idea of how different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, are doing. So we have asked them to look at all your marks, including those in science, and see if there any differences. If there are, they will then be able to sort them out.

Best wishes for your future.