



Clifford CofE Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107150
Local Authority Sheffield
Inspection number 287729
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Joan McKenna

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	108 Psalter Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	4–7		South Yorkshire S11 8YU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2662977
Number on roll (school)	89	Fax number	0114 2678830
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	
		Headteacher	Mrs S Preston
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils come to this very small school from other areas of the city as well as the immediate locality. Most are from areas that are more advantaged than the national average and the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. Around a fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic groups with almost all speaking English fluently. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. The school has gained the Gold ArtsMark and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Clifford Infants is a good, successful school which provides good value for money. Its very strong sense of community is evident the moment you walk through the door. According to parents, it is like 'a village school in an urban setting'. Its very small size is used to advantage in ensuring that all pupils and their families are well known to all staff. Relationships between pupils, staff, parents and other members of the community are excellent. The quality of the care and support given to pupils to help them develop personally is outstanding. Every effort is made to make all pupils feel valued and special and, within this extremely supportive and caring climate, pupils thrive and flourish. Most display levels of confidence and maturity that are quite exceptional for such young children. They feel safe and secure and they enjoy school very much, one pupil saying 'it is fantastic'. The impact of the superb range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities can be seen in the enthusiasm pupils show for their learning and the high levels of participation in school life.

The school also enables pupils to achieve well academically. Their attainment on entry is mixed, but overall is above expectations. The results of the Key Stage 1 assessments at the age of seven when pupils leave the school are consistently significantly above the national average. All groups of pupils make good progress during their time in school as a result of teaching that is good overall. Not all aspects of teaching are fully consistent across the school, however, and occasionally differences in approach between teachers leads to some uneven experiences. This has been particularly the case in Reception. This has been identified by the school and firm and effective action has been taken to tackle the issues. Although in its early stages, this action is already having a positive impact and improvement is evident. The school's assessment systems provide regular information about pupils' standards in writing and mathematics. Information is analysed and used to inform subsequent actions. However, the systems do not identify pupils' progress clearly or easily enough which makes it time-consuming and harder than it should be for the school to identify what action is needed to help individuals improve. Progress in reading is not formally assessed.

A key factor in the success of the school is the dynamism and drive of the headteacher and her tireless determination to make this good school even better. She sets high standards for herself and in this she is a role model for others, demonstrating clear expectations of what is acceptable practice. She is well supported by the recently restructured senior leadership team, and by governors who carry out their responsibilities effectively. The school is well led and managed overall. However, the constraints of being such a small school, including the large number of responsibilities carried by individual leaders and the fact that the headteacher has a significant teaching commitment, have an impact. It means that some systems, such as those for monitoring teaching, are not always sufficiently formalised. Areas requiring further development are well recognised by the school and the capacity to bring about further improvement is strong. However, this is about making a good school even better. Two parents wrote, 'Our daughter loves this school and so do we'. The very high regard in which the school is held by parents is justified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote greater consistency in approaches to teaching across the school, especially in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure pupils' progress in reading is formally assessed, and ensure that the systems for assessing pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics provide easily accessible information on a regular basis about the progress pupils are making.
- Make the arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the school more formal.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Most start school with standards that are above expectations. Children settle in quickly and make good progress in their personal and social development in the Reception class. Until recently, children's academic progress in Reception has not been as fast as elsewhere in the school due to tasks not being sufficiently focused on helping them meet the specific goals set for children of that age. Following recognition of this, changes have been made in the arrangements for planning and teaching in the Reception class, that, although recent, are already having a positive impact. The good provision in Key Stage 1 ensures that pupils' rate of progress increases and they leave school with significantly above average standards. Standards in 2006 were higher than in 2005 in writing and mathematics, but there was a drop at the higher level in reading. Appropriate action is being taken to tackle this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are enthusiastic about every aspect of school life. They behave very well, are polite, friendly and extremely caring towards others and so make a significant contribution to the very positive climate. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The way the Christian ethos is promoted results in pupils feeling important as individuals but also in them having a good sense of their responsibilities towards others. The active school council suggested a 'friendship stop' for the playground which helps ensure that no child feels lonely at playtimes. Pupils have a good sense of how to look after themselves. For example, they are fully supportive of the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles, eating their fruit snacks of strawberries, mangoes and grapes with evident pleasure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers generally adopt a rigorous but fun approach to teaching. This results in pupils being keen and eager learners. Year 2 pupils were very excited about doing a 'real

science experiment' during the inspection. At the same time, they gain a good grounding in literacy and numeracy skills. Good attention is given to meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, utilising the considerable skills of teaching assistants to give effective support. Occasionally, there are some differences in approach between teachers, for example, in the detail of planning, use of the reading scheme or the organisation of tasks. This leads to some unhelpful unevenness in pupils' experiences. Although pupils' standards in writing and mathematics are assessed regularly, the use of target setting to help them improve is not well developed. Teachers hear pupils read regularly but do not formally assess their progress in reading.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A strength of the curriculum is the very wide range of ways in which the school enriches the pupils' learning and gives them opportunities to develop their interests beyond lessons. All staff run popular and well-attended extra-curricular activities, such as for sport, music and science. Physical activity is further promoted through involvement in a sports partnership and through the provision of a good range of equipment in the playground. There are many trips out. Year 1 pupils are looking forward to their trip to the York Rail museum, and Year 2 pupils to their residential later in the year. Visitors with a good variety of skills and expertise come in to work with pupils. Up until recently, planning in the Reception class has not taken enough account of the nationally set curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This has improved this year and activities are now planned with a clearer and more appropriate focus.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children are truly at the heart of this school and the attention given to ensuring their personal care, safety and well-being is of exceptional quality. All adults in the school play a full part in ensuring that pupils know they matter as individuals. Due to excellent relationships, pupils become very confident with adults and are able to express their opinions and needs clearly. They are listened to carefully. Procedures for protecting pupils and ensuring health and safety are in place. Helpful academic guidance is given to pupils but systems for tracking their progress are not comprehensive enough as reading is not assessed. The information about pupils' progress provided by the systems in place is not clear or easily accessible enough which makes the identification of what action needs to be taken more cumbersome than it should ideally be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership is clearly focused on ensuring that pupils get the best possible deal in this school and, in this, the headteacher is a driving force. There is a strong commitment to taking action to bring about improvement, such as in the recent positive developments in the Foundation Stage. Good teamwork in the main results in a clear

sense of the school pulling together towards the same goals. Constraints of its size, however, especially on the workload of the headteacher, result in some systems, such as for monitoring teaching and performance management, not being formal enough. This limits their effectiveness, although main strengths and areas requiring development are well known. Leadership and management are good overall, rather than outstanding as the school judged them, albeit with the very positive features outlined above. Governors are very supportive of the school while carrying out their responsibility to ask questions of it. Their arrangements for monitoring its effectiveness are good, although not yet comprehensive. An exceptional feature of this school is its relations with parents and the wider community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of it and are delighted with the provision it makes for their children.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn very much.

What I liked most about your school

- You like school and enjoy your lessons. Your parents like your school too.
- All the adults in your school care for you very well indeed. They make sure that you feel safe and well cared for and that you know how to keep healthy.
- You are very nice and kind to each other and you play and work nicely together.
- Teachers know how to help you do well with your work. You try hard for them so you make good progress.
- The school organises lots of interesting and fun activities for you.
- Mrs Preston wants your school to be the best it can be for you and she and the other people who manage your school are working hard to make it even better than it is now.

What we have asked the school to do now

- Make sure that teachers try to do things in a similar way so that all of you, including those of you in Reception, do the best in your work.
- Improve the ways that teachers check how well you are doing in reading as well as in writing and mathematics so that they can help you learn as well as possible.
- Make sure that all the actions being taken to check your school is good are written down so there is a record of them for teachers to use.

I hope that you continue to be happy at school and that you keep working hard.