

Cotmanhay Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112569
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	289332
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	246
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr David Schaller
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Beauvale Drive Ilkeston Derbyshire DE7 8RR
Telephone number	01159 322011
Fax number	01159 443075

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school situated in the Derbyshire town of Ilkeston. It serves an area of significant social and economic deprivation. More than twice as many pupils than nationally are entitled to free school meals. There are currently 48% of the pupils on roll identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational need is well above the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British background and attainment on entry is significantly below average. The school shares its building with Cotmanhay Infant School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but improving school. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Staff work hard to meet the needs of learners; they provide good support to individual pupils and their families. Effective steps have been taken since the previous inspection and monitoring visit to secure improvement, although there is still more to do. The school has yet to analyse closely the impact of initiatives and changes on pupils.

Key changes have been in the organisation of leaders and managers of the school and in individual curriculum areas. This is now satisfactory overall. All roles and responsibilities for management and subject coordinators are much clearer and staff have mostly been pro-active in driving their specific areas forward. They all have more accountability in terms of monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning and tracking their progress within individual areas of the curriculum. However, subject coordinators have not yet taken a sufficiently pro-active role in the monitoring of teaching and learning within the classroom. There are some weaknesses in the leadership and management of the overall curriculum resulting in an inappropriate balance of time spent across some subject areas. The school has secured breadth in the curriculum by introducing more cross-curricular learning and a range of curriculum enhancement opportunities.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The school works very well in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being, particularly vulnerable pupils or those experiencing difficulties. It has worked very hard to improve attendance although figures for this remain poor. The capacity to make any necessary improvements remains satisfactory as there are some aspects of leadership and management which are less secure and the impact of newly embedded systems has yet to be realised. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, although there remain too many inconsistencies and the school has not been able to secure continuous improvement in standards. Whilst standards in lessons are still below what is expected nationally and work in books reflects this, staff's expectations are high. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the trend of improving achievement and ensure that standards are as high as they can be by pupils consistently reaching their potential.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure that the balance across subject areas is appropriate and that all pupils obtain their correct curricular entitlement.
- Further develop the capacity to improve by securing the roles and responsibilities of subject and curriculum leaders and ensure there is sufficient monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching to raise standards further.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. In 2006, overall standards improved although they were still below the national average. Standards in science showed significant improvement and were similar to those attained nationally. However, the gap between

school and the national average in English had widened. The school worked hard to improve this position in 2007, and unvalidated data reflects that although standards were still below what is expected nationally, pupils' attainment in the subject improved by 11%. In 2006, although the distribution of higher levels was significantly poorer than the national picture there had been a trend of improvement. This trend was interrupted in 2007 due to challenges within the cohort and the long-term absence of key members of staff. Many of the more able pupils did not attend the end of year tests and this is reflected in the low number of Levels 4 and 5 attained in English and Level 5 in maths. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Pupils with statements of special educational need usually achieve well because of the good quality input they receive. The school's improved assessment and tracking systems ensure that staff are better informed for grouping pupils appropriately in core subjects and setting realistic, but challenging, targets. The school rightly places a high degree of emphasis on pupils' basic skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development of pupils is satisfactory. They have a strong sense of their school community and they very much enjoy taking on responsibilities which help them prepare for their future. Most have positive attitudes to school and their work. Behaviour across the school is satisfactory although in the majority of lessons it is good. There is a small minority who mis-behave and several pupils and parents believe that bullying occurs. The school has good procedures to manage such issues and has recently excluded pupils when necessary. The school actively supports the development of healthy lifestyles through good quality school lunches and healthy snacks. An after school club re-enforces healthy eating and the need for an active lifestyle. However, the school does not provide the recommended two hours of physical education each week. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe although some struggle to understand how their behaviour affects others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The school gives strong messages that encourage pupils to develop an understanding of right and wrong. However, there are too few acts of collective worship to help develop spiritual awareness. While the school works hard to make clear to parents the importance of their children attending regularly, attendance is below average because a small number have poor records and several regularly arrive late.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. Staff are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses because of improved monitoring by the headteacher. With greater emphasis on subject leadership, particularly in English and mathematics, staff are now well placed and supported to deliver good quality lessons. Improved data ensures that lessons are adequately planned and additional support for pupils is targeted appropriately to their needs. The proportion of good lessons has improved over time. During the inspection more than 50% of lessons were good or better, with some lessons that were outstanding. Features of good lessons are the good pace and skilled questioning of pupils. Staff are sensitive to when pupils need to go over things. Ongoing assessment throughout and lots of active learning are also features of the best lessons. This is especially true of mathematics and science, where pupils use practical equipment to learn in fun ways. Pupils settle quickly to work and behaviour is well managed overall to

ensure there is little disruption to learning. Staff have high expectations and pupils are very clear of the lesson objectives and their learning targets, ensuring they are continually well focused.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Thorough planning by year group teams ensures a clear focus on English and mathematics that emphasises the development of basic skills. Staff have increased opportunities to develop investigative and problem solving skills which have led to improvements in science. Pupils now learn French. The provision for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection. However, while the curriculum is broad, there are weaknesses in the balance of time allocated to different subjects. For instance there is more than twice the average time allocated to personal, social and health education than recommended, whilst there is less time allocated to other areas - including physical education - than seen in schools nationally. There is little time allocated for collective worship on class timetables and, while this sometimes occurs, it is not sufficiently regular or formal. There is a good number of after-school activities, particularly for sport. Themed weeks with in depth study have enriched the curriculum and the displays around the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Many parents speak highly of how well staff know and care for their children in many ways. The school has strong and effective links with a very wide range of agencies which support children and their families. In partnership with the feeder infant school the school has recently appointed a family resource worker who liaises with local services. There is good provision for those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and a nurture group provides for those who require more support to fit into the school community. The school devotes a lot of teaching time to the development of personal, social and health education programmes. The system to record information on checks of those who help in school has very recently been improved. The assessment of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection and staff make satisfactory use of such information in their planning. Whilst the school has gone some way to providing better academic guidance, the marking of pupils' work is still variable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have strengthened significantly since the previous inspection and in response to the serious weaknesses identified at that time. The long serving staff are totally dedicated and have worked tirelessly to bring about school improvement. The headteacher is working closely with members of the senior leadership team, who make regular assessments of pupils' progress and use of data alongside regular work scrutiny. However, the school still has some way to go with its curriculum overview. Although the curriculum is now monitored through a three-year rolling cycle, timetables and the allocation of time to particular subjects are not analysed effectively. This results in pupils not always receiving the nationally recommended length of time for particular subjects, for example, physical education.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and has become more accurate. It has ensured that the outcomes for pupils are promoted and that there are equal opportunities for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or who experience emotional or learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the school does not monitor the quality of the additional support given to pupils enough to ensure staffing resources are always used effectively. The governing body is committed and supportive. It is prepared to challenge information provided by the headteacher. However, it has yet to really grasp its monitoring role and help to drive school improvement from behind by being more analytical of the impact of changing initiatives on pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Most pupils feel safe in school although there is sometimes some less kind behaviour which takes place in the playground which has not been totally eradicated.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cotmanhay Junior School, Ilkeston, Derbyshire. DE7 8RR

Mrs Hall and I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were pleased that you were so willing to talk to us about Cotmanhay Juniors and to explain what you liked about it. You had really good ideas about some things which could improve. I do hope that you'll share these with your school council and with Mr Schaller.

We think that your school is getting better. Your teachers have worked really hard in the last two years to improve the leadership and management of the school. The senior leadership team on the whole are much clearer about what they need to do to make sure you all get a good standard of education. Because of this and their checking of assessment information and your work in books more regularly, they know much more about the levels you're working at and what they need to focus on in lessons. We have asked the school to now make sure that there is enough checking of lessons to identify what could be improved and to continue to work hard at making sure all lessons are good. We have also asked the school to make sure you do enough of each subject and think you could do with more P.E. and science.

You are making at least satisfactory progress because the school works hard to make sure you all get the support you need, including extra support from teaching assistants. Some of you enjoy the Phoenix Room or the Positive Play sessions. We were very pleased to hear about the PACE Club after-school and that some of your parents go to that. Well done to those of you that are trying really hard to keep healthy. We think some of you try very hard in lessons and that you achieve satisfactorily, but we want you to do better. You can help yourselves by turning up to school on time and always making sure you come to school. This really makes a difference to how well you do. By working hard now, keeping on behaving well in lessons and listening to the teachers, you will really give yourselves the very best chance in life.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne HMI