



Spire Nursery and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112660
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289367
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Patricia Cox

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Derby Road
School category	Community		Chesterfield
Age range of pupils	3–7		Derbyshire S40 2EU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01246 234727
Number on roll (school)	200	Fax number	01246 234727
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Margery Lievesley
		Headteacher	Ms Jane Garrett
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2004		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007	Inspection number 289367
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils in this average sized infant school mainly come from the local area and most are of White British origin. Almost all have English as their first language. The proportion entitled to free school meals is well above the national average, reflecting the high level of social deprivation in the area. The proportion identified with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There is a high proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Most of these attend the Diagnostic and Assessment Nursery for children with autism. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Health Promoting Schools Award.

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 and improving school which has developed well since it came out of special measures two years ago. It gives good value for money. Parents have a very positive view of what it provides. Pupils achieve well from a low starting point and reach standards that are average overall. Some features are outstanding, for example, the pupils' achievement in English and mathematics, where standards are above average by the time they leave, and the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are as expected. Their achievement is satisfactory in science, where attainment is below average, particularly in scientific investigation.

Teaching is good throughout the school, thoroughly building on pupils' basic skills, and based firmly on a good curriculum for both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. All staff have excellent relationships with pupils and give ample encouragement. The management of behaviour, particularly of pupils with behavioural needs, is very effective and extremely sensitive. However, the transition from Reception to Year 1 is not managed as effectively as it could be, so that the change in style is too abrupt.

Most children enter the school with very poor personal and social skills, particularly in their ability to relate to others. All staff work exceptionally hard to develop these abilities, so that they are sound by the time the pupils leave. Pupils have a sound knowledge about keeping healthy and safe and thoroughly enjoy school. Because of the very good range of opportunities provided, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. The school council makes a positive impact on school life and is alert to any improvements that could be made. Behaviour is satisfactory overall; although some younger children do not have good self-control, the impact of the school's effective measures to improve behaviour is demonstrated in the better conduct of most of the older pupils.

The school takes exceptional care of its pupils' health and welfare, and works extremely well with parents and outside agencies to promote their all-round progress. Very good care is taken to meet their physical and emotional needs. The school's excellent target setting and assessment systems are used very well to give pupils guidance on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The progress the school has made over recent years and the quality of its provision are due to the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the strong teamwork she has created. Established staff carry out their roles well and newer subject leaders are developing their skills rapidly. Through its very rigorous methods for checking provision, the school has an exceptionally accurate view of how well it is doing and takes considered and extremely effective action on all areas identified for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science, particularly investigative work, to a level closer to those in English and mathematics.

- Improve the way in which the change in the curriculum from Reception to Year 1 is managed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' achievement is good overall and in English and mathematics it is outstanding. Children make good progress in both Nursery classes and the Reception class, particularly in their language and mathematical skills, so that standards are closer to those expected by the time they enter Year 1. They continue to make consistently good progress in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics have risen considerably, and consistently, since 2001, when they were exceptionally low, and have been above average since 2004. Pupils presently in Year 2 are working at a higher level than expected in English and mathematics. Standards in ICT have risen since the previous inspection, and are now average. However, they are below average in science, where few pupils reach the higher Level 3. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent. This is because their needs are known so well and work is closely matched to these. Pupils whose first language is not English make very good progress in acquiring fluency.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The pupils improve markedly during their time in school as a result of outstanding care. They thoroughly enjoy being in school and take part enthusiastically in all that is offered. Older pupils demonstrate their developing ability to take responsibility and use their initiative in volunteering to befriend those who are lonely, or by helping to clear up in the dining hall. Most pupils learn to behave well in class and around school. They enjoy the many activities on offer at playtime, although there is some boisterousness in their games. Because of the school's rigorous approach to absence and punctuality, attendance has risen considerably and is now average. The school promotes health thoroughly, and school dinners are well balanced but pupils' lunch boxes do not always reflect a healthy choice. Some pupils are often tired or listless during the school day. Nevertheless, given the progress they have made and the standards they reach, the pupils have been given a good foundation for their future lives and education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils progress well and most show good attitudes to their work as a result of effective teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is structured very well in order to develop carefully

the children's language and social skills. Teachers throughout the school understand how pupils learn, and use a wide range of strategies to engage them, for example through using interactive whiteboards. Consequently, most pupils concentrate and try to do their best. Frequent opportunities for pupils to speak and listen support the school's drive to improve their communication skills effectively. Pupils of all abilities are usually challenged effectively so that most do well, although the more able pupils are occasionally not fully stretched. Where teaching is only satisfactory, planning is not as rigorous as it might be and there is a lack of firmness in managing behaviour. Pupils are supported very well by their individual targets in English and mathematics which show them what they need to learn next and give them opportunities to reflect on their own learning. Teaching assistants make a strong impact on learning because they are very supportive, notably of the efforts of less confident pupils and those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is especially well focused on ensuring that pupils make best possible progress in English and mathematics. The Foundation Stage curriculum is devised thoroughly to develop the children's skills in all areas of learning. Improvements in the provision for ICT have resulted in pupils making good progress in this subject. The school is aware that it needs to give more emphasis to science, particularly investigative work. There is a very strong and effective emphasis on supporting pupils' personal and social skills in order to equip them for future life in society. The curriculum strongly reflects the school's priority to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Links between subjects are increasingly successful and make learning more meaningful. There is a good range of activities outside the school day that enrich the curriculum and which many pupils enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All necessary checks on adults who work in the school are carried out and meet government requirements. Child protection procedures are rigorous and there is careful monitoring of the pupils who are vulnerable or give cause for concern. Pupils say that there is always an adult who they can turn to if they are upset. The extremely good assessment systems are used well to identify the pupils who are not making the expected progress and to spot any other factors which affect them. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties are identified early and are provided with very good, expert support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, very successfully focused on raising standards and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. The headteacher's

outstanding leadership is supported very effectively by the newly appointed assistant headteacher. Excellent self-evaluation provides the school with a very clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and has resulted in a good track record of improvements since the last inspection. The progress and welfare of all pupils are central to its vision and it is very effective in engaging them all. The school works exceptionally hard to involve and consult parents. Early morning sessions, with parents working in class with their children, are calm, sociable occasions, giving plenty of opportunities for parents to meet staff and look at their children's work. Governance is good: governors are supportive and know and understand the school's work well. Given the school's recent advances and the shared ambition for even further progress, there is good capacity to improve.

The Diagnostic and Assessment Nursery is a well-equipped and valuable resource which works extremely well with the few part time children who attend. The school uses the Nursery's resources very effectively to augment its own, but the Nursery's expertise is significantly underused, with much spare capacity.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	3
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	1

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 behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	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?	1

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	1
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	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

15 January 2007

Dear Children

Spire Nursery and Infant School, Derby Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 2EU

Mr Matthews and I really enjoyed coming to your school and I wanted to tell you what we found out. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you very much and thought you had a lot of very good ideas.

We agree with you when you said that you go to a good school and that your teachers always try to make learning fun. You obviously enjoy being at school and most of you work very hard. You do really well with your reading, writing and mathematics and you're doing much better in ICT, but we thought that your teachers could help you to learn more about science. We have also asked the school to make sure that the children in Year 1 have some activities that follow on better from the ones they have in the Reception class.

There are things you can do to make your school even better. Most of you behave well but we think that some of you could try a bit harder to do as you're told and take turns with each other. A few of you are a little rough in the playground. You know how to keep healthy and eat well, although some of you seem very tired. Please make sure that you go to bed early enough, and some of you should bring healthier food for lunch. We thought that the school council does a good job in checking that you have all the play things you need and some of the older children are good at making sure that you all have someone to play with.

Your school looks after you very well because Ms Garrett and all the staff work extremely hard and run the school well.

Our best wishes for the future.

Mrs Pat Cox Lead Inspector