



Cassiobury Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117293
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290786
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Raminder Arora

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Bellmount Wood Avenue
School category	Community		Watford
Age range of pupils	3–7		Hertfordshire WD17 3PE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 222782
Number on roll (school)	240	Fax number	01923 245525
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mike Cresswell
		Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2002		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007	Inspection number 290786
-------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school catering for 240 pupils age 3-7. The school's catchment area is changing, with an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose home language is not English is above the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and the school deprivation indicator is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school holds Healthy Schools, Active Mark and Investor 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

Cassiobury offers a good education to its pupils and provides good value for money. This reflects the clear vision shown by the headteacher and staff for personal and academic success.

A strong focus on pupils' personal development, including a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, contributes well to their academic success and preparation for later life. From the time they start in the Nursery pupils show a high level of enjoyment. Good provision in the Foundation Stage provides a secure start for children's subsequent learning. 'Nursery staff have made the start of my son's school life problem-free and memorable', commented one parent. Enthusiasm and positive attitudes to learning are promoted through a well-planned and enriched curriculum. Where pupils show concerns, whether personal, social or academic, the school provides a good level of care and support that enables them to be fully included in the life of the school. One parent wrote: 'The school provides a happy, stable, open environment, where learning is valued'. While most parents are positive about the school, a number show concerns, for example over bullying. There is no evidence to substantiate these concerns, which indicates that the school needs to work even more closely with parents to ensure a clearer understanding and realistic expectations of its work.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. They enter the school with skills and understanding that are above average. Good teaching results in many children exceeding the learning goals expected for their age. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to make good progress and achieve standards that are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The slight decline in the number of pupils attaining higher levels in the last two years is mainly due to the changing intake and an increasing number of pupils learning English as a new language. The need to further strengthen this provision and ensure that these pupils are achieving their best has been recognised by the school. Teaching is good overall. Learning in most lessons is well matched to individual pupils' needs. However, in a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is inconsistent and some pupils lose their direction and sense of purpose. The senior team is keen to establish consistently good teaching to raise standards further.

The headteacher's good leadership has developed the staff into a united team and given the school a clear direction, which is securely centred on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. The quality of monitoring and evaluation is a key feature of the school's success. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school, with the result that the school has made good improvements since the last inspection. The scope for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons are as brisk and purposeful as the best.
- Continue to implement plans to meet the needs of the changing intake, particularly the increasing numbers whose home language is not English.

- Help parents to hold realistic expectations of the school and keep them better informed of how well their children are doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge beyond those normally expected of their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, so that they are well placed to start the National Curriculum in Year 1. This good progress continues through Years 1 and 2, and the standards have been close to exceptionally high in recent years. In 2005 and 2006 standards dropped slightly to well above average. The school attributes this to the increasing numbers of pupils whose home language is not English and there are plans to restructure the senior leadership team to address this issue. A few parents consider that their children are not making fast enough progress but the inspection found no evidence of underachievement among any groups of pupils. One parent wrote: 'My son is very happy at school and I feel he has made very good progress'. The school has set challenging targets for the 2007 national assessments, aiming to improve pupils' skills in sentence construction, grammar and punctuation as particular priorities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They are confident and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in and around school, but instances of calling out in lessons or taking too long to settle occasionally affect learning. Attendance is good, reflecting the fact that most pupils enjoy school immensely. They respond positively to the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn to cooperate and work as a team through various activities, clubs and community events. As a result they leave the school as mature and sensible pupils, well adjusted for their next stage of learning. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to stay healthy. The school's good work in health education and very good partnerships that promote sporting activities has been recognised by the achievement of two national awards. Pupils feel safe in school and make positive contributions through being buddies and monitors. Although not yet fully established, the school council has begun to make a difference, as one member stated, 'We make the school a better place to be.' Opportunities for fund-raising at charity events contribute further to pupils' personal qualities that will eventually prepare them for working roles in future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers set a good range of activities to interest pupils and encourage them to learn. They make effective use of interactive whiteboards to keep pupils focused in lessons and nearly always have an activity on the computer related to the lesson's theme. Teaching assistants provide appropriate support to pupils, including those new to English, to ensure that they meet with success. Occasionally, the pace of lessons slows when pupils spend too long on an independent activity and their interest wanes, or when a teacher takes too long to regain pupils' attention. There are helpful comments in pupils' books that tell them what they need to do to improve their work, such as remembering to use capital letters properly or the spacing of words.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. The range of extra-curricular activities and events is an outstanding strength of the school. These are well attended and contribute significantly to pupils' positive attitudes. Additionally, pupils are engaged in a range of practical, creative and investigative activities through regular subject focus weeks, such as Personal Health and Social Education Week, music, religious education and science weeks. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and also learn French at lunchtimes. Work in the Foundation Stage is carefully planned to provide a good balance between structured class sessions and activities chosen by the children, which enables them to achieve well. The curriculum planning ensures that pupils acquire the necessary basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This effectively supports their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All required procedures for ensuring the safety, protection and welfare of pupils are in place. The school has effective systems for identifying pupils who need extra help with their learning. Most receive good support to reach their targets. However, as the make-up of the intake changes, the school is, rightly, focusing more systematically on the needs of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Those with particular gifts or talents are given more challenging work. Teachers use information on how well pupils are doing and set them targets. Pupils know their targets and when they have reached them. The records the school keeps show that they are making good progress.

Parents in the main are very appreciative of the way the school cares for their children but a small number feel that there is an issue with bullying. The inspection found no evidence of bullying in school. Pupils say: 'There is sometimes some pushing and

shoving but not real bullying'; and a parent wrote, 'The school's approach to the prevention of bullying is first class and should be commended'. However, the fact that a number of parents perceive bullying to be a problem highlights the need for parents to be given a clearer and more realistic understanding of how the school deals with such matters.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher leads with a clear and purposeful vision that is well-focused on continual improvement. A good partnership has been established with the deputy head and all staff with management responsibilities and this helps maintain and promote the school's ethos. Subject leaders have a good understanding of the areas of development through their regular and thorough monitoring. The school has identified the right areas for improvement and is working towards them; for example, the need for more pupils to reach the higher levels in reading and writing and the needs of pupils new to English. This shows that its self-evaluation is effective. The way the school works to include pupils from all backgrounds is very good and contributes to the school's warm family ethos. The views of all members of the community are welcomed and most parents are very supportive of the school. One parent wrote: 'It is a school well recommended by many people for its quality of teaching'. Governors watch over the school very well and their team spirit is helping to drive it forward.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2
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	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	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

Cassiobury Infant and Nursery School, Bellmount Wood Avenue, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 3PE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school, and a special thank you to those children who spent time talking to us about their work and the many good things they enjoy about school. We were pleased to hear that you like playing recorders, having fresh fruit and drinks and joining in the 'fun and fitness' activities.

We agree with you that yours is a good school. We think that your teachers and other grown-ups look after you well and help you make good progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. You have lots of interesting activities, especially during special events, such as the 'Festivals week' or the 'Black History Month', and so we would like to say a big 'well done' to your teachers and their assistants who give you so much help, both in lessons and in the many exciting clubs.

We think you behave well and that you are good at caring for other people. We are pleased that grown-ups listen to your ideas and help all of you to work and play sensibly together. Some of you are right to be proud to be members of the school council and to look after new pupils when they arrive.

To make your school even better, Mrs Daniels and Miss Johnston are going to

- Help all the staff to teach in a way that makes lessons good from beginning to end.
- Find ways of helping those of you who speak a language other than English at home, to get better at English and to make faster progress.
- Keep in closer touch with your parents and tell them more about how the school works and how well you are all doing.

I think that everyone at Cassiobury school can work together to do these things. I hope that you go on enjoying all the things you do there that help you to learn and be happy.

With best Wishes

Raminder Arora

Lead inspector