



Catherine Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120002
Local Authority Leicester City
Inspection number 291600
Inspection dates 27–28 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Ulverscroft Road
School category	Community		Leicester
Age range of pupils	3–7		LE4 6BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2625422
Number on roll (school)	353	Fax number	0116 2511636
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Nirmal Basson
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an inner city school where almost all pupils are from minority ethnic families. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. Many pupils are in the early stages of learning English or have no spoken English when they start school. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average, with language skills being especially weak.

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 school that welcomes pupils from many different backgrounds and supports and cares for them successfully. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and there is a calm and happy atmosphere in the school that fosters pupils' personal development well. Pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. They cheerfully celebrate each other's successes and enjoy school. As one parent said, 'My children love coming to school and they can't wait to get here each morning'. There is a good curriculum that helps pupils to learn how to look after themselves and to stay safe.

Pupils' achievement is good because they are taught well and they become keen learners. Good provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) gives children a good start to their education, with the strong focus on developing skills in spoken English being particularly effective. Children make good progress from their different starting points in all areas of learning, although standards are lower than those found nationally by the end of the Reception year. In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers are well organised, although insufficient use is made of the outdoor area to support learning.

Although standards by the end of Year 2 are below average, they are improving. Pupils make the best progress in reading and writing. This is because teaching of basic literacy skills is very well structured and teachers plan work that carefully builds on what pupils already know. Additional support for pupils who are struggling with reading helps to ensure that they improve quickly. In mathematics, where progress is satisfactory, pupils do better when they are taught in groups that have been grouped by ability. When they are taught in whole classes, work does not always meet the needs of pupils well enough. This sometimes slows the pace of learning, especially of more able pupils. Throughout the school, well trained support staff play a vital part in pupils' learning, especially when working with groups in literacy or supporting those who are learning English.

Leadership and management are good. Parents are very pleased with the way that the school is led and they are right when they say that the quiet and determined work of the headteacher has been a key factor in the recent rise in test results. Senior managers carefully check pupils' progress to make sure it is good enough and have a thorough understanding of what still needs improving. They have correctly identified that the enthusiastic subject leaders, many of whom are new to their post, are not yet given enough opportunity to take responsibility for monitoring their subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is always enough challenge for more able pupils in mathematics so that they make better progress.
- Improve the use of the outdoor areas in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in checking teaching and learning in their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from their very low starting points. Although standards by the end of the Reception year are lower than those found nationally, children settle well and rapidly improve their basic literacy and mathematical skills.

Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average but have been improving in recent years as recent initiatives, especially in literacy, begin to show their impact. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in reading and writing, because their differing needs are effectively supported by a well structured teaching programme for basic skills. In mathematics, where progress is satisfactory, the school is good at helping pupils to reach nationally expected levels, but too few get beyond this. This is because there are missed opportunities to stretch more able pupils, especially when a whole class is taught together. Throughout the school, timely and good quality support from teachers and skilled teaching assistants helps pupils in the early stages of learning spoken English to improve their skills quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils do well because they enjoy school and their behaviour is good. They work hard in lessons and are keen to learn. As one pupil said, 'If I work hard I will get a good job when I grow up'. Pupils from different backgrounds play together happily and they support each other sensitively in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has recently begun to take a more rigorous approach to discouraging parents from taking their children on extended holidays during term time. This has already resulted in improved attendance in the current year.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Throughout the school, pupils show a good concern for the welfare and well-being of others. Older pupils respect each other's differing views and beliefs and show sensitivity towards younger pupils, for example when supporting them as 'playground buddies'. Strong links with other countries help pupils to have an especially well developed understanding of cultures other than their own. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe. For example, they explain clearly the importance of taking care when crossing the busy main road near the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by raising funds for local charities and taking part in local events. They are prepared soundly for the next stage of their education. They make good progress in improving their basic skills, but some pupils lack independence and find it hard to work without adult support.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because teaching is good. Interactive whiteboards are used well to illustrate key teaching points and very good relationships with staff contribute very effectively to pupils' confidence and willingness to learn. They enjoy their lessons and concentrate well on the tasks that teachers give them. Effective extra help is given, by both teachers and the highly skilled teaching assistants, to pupils who need it. This includes those who are just learning English and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is a major factor in their good achievement. Feedback to pupils is good both orally and in their books so that pupils are clear about how they might improve.

Teaching is better in English than in mathematics. A good programme of work is in place which allows teachers to focus exactly on what needs to be taught and the way of organising pupils into small groups enables them to work closely with all pupils. However, in mathematics, teaching is not as precise and work is not consistently planned to meet the range of needs within the class, especially those of the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is adapted well to the needs and interests of all pupils. Throughout the school, recently revised curriculum planning provides a good framework for systematically developing pupils' key skills. High priority is given to developing literacy skills with good programmes of work in place to improve reading and writing standards. In the Nursery and Reception classes, there are a good range of interesting activities that capture the children's attention when working indoors. However, the school recognises that the outdoor environment is underused and children do not have sufficient opportunities to work outside. Visits and visitors are used effectively to add interest to learning and the good range of after school clubs is appreciated by parents and pupils. One pupil typically said, 'I love the computer club, we learn a lot and have good fun!'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The effective way that members of staff provide high quality personal care and support makes this a happy school where pupils are keen to do their best. Pupils confidently report that they know what to do if they have a worry. There are good arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety. When necessary, the school works very closely with outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being. Academic support is good. Pupils' progress is carefully assessed in English and mathematics. This information is used well to ensure that work is matched to the needs of all the pupils in English,

although this is less successful in mathematics. Individual target setting is in place and is successfully helping pupils understand how to improve their work. Any pupils facing difficulties are identified early and effective arrangements are put in place to enable them to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school with all adults working together to improve provision. Senior managers have established good systems for identifying strengths and weaknesses. This means that the school knows what needs doing and has been able to take effective action. Over the last two years, the school has rightly been focusing on improving standards in English. The success of initiatives such as the introduction of new programmes for teaching letter sounds and improving writing can be seen in the marked rise in test results over the last two years. The school has successfully demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve and has already begun to work on improving progress in mathematics by introducing teaching by ability groups for part of each week in Years 1 and 2. This is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

The school has recently restructured its management team and there are several new subject leaders. They have made a good start to their work by monitoring teachers' planning but are not yet sufficiently involved in checking on the quality of teaching and analysing data so that they can get a full picture of provision in their subjects. Governance is good. Despite problems with recruiting new governors, they are kept well informed by the headteacher and have a good understanding of what needs improving.

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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?	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	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	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	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	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	3

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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school in such a polite and friendly way and for showing us your work. We are pleased that you come to such a good school.

What your school does best:

- Good teaching helps you to do well, especially in reading and writing.
- Your behaviour is good and you enjoy school and all the interesting activities that teachers provide for you.
- You all get on well together and work hard in lessons.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they give you good support when you are struggling with your work.
- Your headteacher and teachers are working hard to make the school even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Make sure that you do even better in mathematics by ensuring that your work is always hard enough.
- Give children in the Nursery and Reception classes more opportunities to work outside.
- Involve teachers more in finding out how well the school is doing and in planning for developments.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and by coming to school regularly.