



St Mary's Fields Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 120025
Local Authority Leicester City
Inspection number 291608
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Heyworth Road
School category	Community		Leicester
Age range of pupils	3–7		LE3 2DA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2824623
Number on roll (school)	177	Fax number	0116 2824623
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Susan Hullat
		Headteacher	Carol Browne
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–7	29–30 November 2006	291608

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Pupils come to the school from a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. The two largest groups are from White British or Indian heritage. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above average. When children start in the Nursery, their skills, understanding and knowledge range from below to well below the levels expected for their age. Many children, including some whose first language is English, start school with very limited spoken English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average although these pupils are not distributed evenly through the school. An above average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

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. Members of staff are successful in welcoming and supporting pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds and abilities, enabling them all to achieve equally well. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Speaking and listening are taught especially well, helping all children, including those with little spoken English, to make good progress and to become confident and willing learners. Standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average, although test results are higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. Whilst writing is taught well in literacy lessons, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to increase the pace of learning by developing these skills further when writing in other subjects. This aspect of the school's work is not monitored rigorously enough and as a result more able pupils are not consistently challenged at these times. Teaching and learning are good because members of staff meet pupils' differing needs well in English and mathematics. Skilful teaching assistants provide good additional learning support for small groups. The good relationships between members of staff and pupils are an important factor in pupils' good personal development. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are very good at following the school rules to 'do your best', 'be kind to others' and 'be safe'. Pupils take pride in their school. They say that their school is 'the best' and that the effective school council is 'trying to make it even better'. A good curriculum is enhanced with a wide range of interesting additional activities that extend pupils' learning well. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good care, guidance and support for all pupils. They understand the pupils' personal needs well and have thorough systems for assessing progress in English and mathematics. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and other senior leaders are passionate about improving provision and standards. Accurate selfevaluation makes them knowledgeable about what the school does well. Previous school developments, such as the use of role play boxes to develop speaking and listening, have enabled pupils to make faster progress. This provides clear evidence that the school is well placed to improve further. Governors provide senior leaders with a good level of support and challenge. Most parents are very pleased with the work of the school and the way they are made to feel welcome. One parent summarised the views of many by saying, 'pupils make a great start to their school life at St Mary's'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing by the end of Year 2, particularly for the more able, by giving pupils a greater opportunity to write purposefully in subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education.
- Monitor pupils' writing across the curriculum more rigorously.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their differing starting points. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and by the end of the Reception year, most are working slightly below the levels expected for their age. Children become keen to learn, although their writing skills are less well developed than other areas of learning. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and science, with writing being the weaker area. Pupils make good progress in writing in literacy lessons, but teachers do not always demand enough from pupils when they are writing in other subjects. This is most noticeable for the more able pupils who do not always produce written work of a high enough standard. The school's information for checking how well pupils are doing shows that all pupils achieve equally well including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those in the early stages of learning spoken English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils do well because they feel safe and happy at this friendly school. A Year 1 pupil summed this up by saying, 'you can rely on the staff and school council if you are hurt or need a friend'. The below average attendance belies pupils' enthusiasm for school. A high proportion of absence is as a result of extended term time holidays. The school knows that these pupils make less progress than the others and is working well with parents to reduce absences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respond well to 'thoughts of the week', such as 'taking care of our world', and these broaden their spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils from various cultural backgrounds get on very well together. Good moral and social behaviour is demonstrated through their understanding of each other's needs and their outstanding behaviour. They gain a good understanding of what is needed to lead healthy and safe lives. For example, they are quick to give the reasons why they enjoy eating fruit. The 'playground friends' who are available to support all pupils illustrate their good concern for the safety and well-being of others. Involvement in fund raising for charities and contributing their views through the work of the school council provide opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils make good progress in developing basic skills and independence and these prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching by teachers and teaching assistants enables all pupils, including those who are learning to speak English, to learn quickly. The Foundation Stage gives pupils a good start to their education by instilling good work habits and an enthusiasm for learning. All teachers engage pupils' attention well and classroom relationships are strong. The skills of speaking and listening are promoted well. Good opportunities for pupils to work by themselves, in small groups or in pairs maintain their interest successfully and teach them to cooperate. Pupils in Year 2, for example, thanked each other for being 'good partners' in their numeracy work. Teachers ensure that pupils enjoy their work by providing interesting and exciting activities. These are carefully planned so that pupils of all abilities are given work that is suitable to their understanding, particularly in English and mathematics. This does not always work as effectively in other areas of the curriculum and more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in their written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A broad curriculum is offered to the pupils and independent learning skills are promoted particularly successfully. The provision for pupils who are learning to speak English is strong and specific vocabulary is promoted well. The Foundation Stage provides children with an interesting range of experiences that are particularly good at improving their speaking and listening skills. For example, children in the Reception class explained the Christmas story clearly whilst taking part in a role play activity in the 'stable'. Themed days, visitors, visits to places of interest, residential visits and instrumental music lessons enrich the curriculum and excite and motivate the pupils across the school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about playtime activities. Whilst basic literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well, the development of pupils' writing skills across other subjects is less well developed. The school has identified this area and has plans to improve this aspect of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is of a high standard. The school's procedures for ensuring the welfare and safety of pupils are thoroughly understood and applied by all members of staff. Improvements in the way attendance is being monitored have been successful in reducing absences, although these remain above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support from their teachers and well-trained teaching assistants, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English also receive high quality support. The school keeps a careful

record of pupils' academic progress in English and mathematics so that extra support or help can be provided when it is needed. The school has satisfactory systems for monitoring progress in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and rigorous leadership that is tirelessly aimed at improving pupils' achievement. Her determination and enthusiasm motivate other members of staff and governors, who all work together well as a team to make the school even better. Governance is good. Governors frequently visit the school to provide support and challenge and have identified where they need training to enhance their roles further. School developments are based on a thorough analysis of assessment information and views of parents. They are carefully thought through to ensure that they will benefit the pupils. Subject leaders have good systems for monitoring teaching, learning and standards in English, mathematics and the Foundation Stage. These allow teachers to identify changes in pupils' needs quickly. For example, the school has recently adapted the curriculum to provide more practical activities for younger pupils to ease their transition from the Reception classes into Year 1. The school is aware of the need to increase the rigour in monitoring provision in other subjects.

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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	1
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	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

- Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. We are pleased that you come to such a good school. Here are some other good things about you and your school:
- Your teachers help you to learn quickly, especially in reading and mathematics, and help you to reach similar standards to other children of your age.
- You really enjoy the interesting things you can do at school.
- You are looked after well at school.
- You behave extremely well and are polite and friendly.
- Your teachers are working hard to make your school even better.
- Your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school. What we have asked your school to do now:
- Help you to do better writing in every subject.
- Make sure that teachers check that your writing is good enough in all subjects. 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 always working hard and trying your best.