



North Clifton County Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122662
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292471
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Dorothy Bathgate HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Community		North Clifton, Newark
Age range of pupils	3–11		Nottinghamshire NG23 7AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01522 778609
Number on roll (school)	50	Fax number	01522 778611
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Alec Webster
		Headteacher	Mrs Janet Medley
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2000		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006	Inspection number 292471
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

Description of the school

North Clifton is a small rural primary school serving the villages of North and South Clifton and Spalford. Increasingly, the school admits pupils from outside the immediate locality, many of whom join it part way through their education. Major building work over the past two years has significantly improved the facilities within this old Victorian school. The creation of a Foundation Stage unit means that children are now taught in three classes each morning, with the Reception age children joining the Key Stage 1 class for the afternoon sessions. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils enter the school with average to above average standards. All teachers are part-time except for the headteacher who is the only full-time member of staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

North Clifton Primary is a rapidly improving school. It has been through a turbulent time since its last inspection in 2000 and, consequently the number of pupils fell for several years. The growing reputation of the school locally over the past two years has seen numbers rise again to a healthy state. There have been major changes in staffing, including the appointment of the current headteacher in February 2004. This appointment marked the beginning of a significant turnaround. The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, but the determination of the headteacher, staff and governors to succeed means that some aspects are already good. The school demonstrates a sound capacity for improvement.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have been generally above average since 2003, representing broadly satisfactory achievement from the pupils' starting points. Standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in 2004 and 2005 and broadly average in 2006. The school has set challenging targets for its pupils in 2007 that indicate its aspiration to raise standards and achievement from satisfactory to good. The new Foundation Stage unit provides a very good start for pupils through a well planned curriculum and an exciting and stimulating learning environment. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with emerging strengths. The headteacher provides effective and determined leadership for the school and has high aspirations for pupils, which all the staff endorse. She leads a committed and enthusiastic team who share her passion to see the school move forward. Together they are beginning to refine systems for self-evaluation to help them identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide them with a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve greater success.

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning over the last two years which are having a positive impact on raising standards. Teaching is satisfactory rather than good overall because not all year groups make equally good progress in the mixed-age classes, particularly in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The school is aware of the need to address this issue and is already planning improvements. The curriculum is satisfactory with some exciting new initiatives in their infancy at the time of the inspection. A more thematic approach is providing good opportunities for cross-curricular work. The recent improvement in opportunities for pupils to apply their growing skills in information and communication technology (ICT) continues to be an area for development.

The personal development and well-being of pupils is a real strength of the school, reflected in the good attendance and exemplary behaviour of pupils. The strong family ethos was described by one pupil in her comment, 'We all get along together and our school is like a jigsaw puzzle, where we are the pieces which fit together.' Care, guidance and support are good. The headteacher has successfully improved communications with parents, who appreciate the warm and welcoming atmosphere the school provides.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more rigorous systems for self-evaluation which will ensure clear priorities are identified in relation to raising standards and achievement.
- Tailor work more specifically to meet the needs of all age-groups in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- Provide additional opportunities for pupils to exploit their growing ICT skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory, including for pupils who have learning difficulties. Most children enter school with at least average standards and, by the end of Reception, they generally exceed the learning goals expected for their age. The results of the 2006 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were average and show improvement on the two previous years when results were below average. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006 were similar to previous years, with pupils generally achieving above the national expectations. Although pupils have recently started making good progress in English and science, overall achievement is satisfactory from their starting points in the Foundation Stage.

The school recognises that the pace and quality of learning have been only satisfactory in Key Stage 1 but that learning has accelerated at Key Stage 2. In less challenging lessons, pupils of different ages tend to work on similar activities which has prevented some pupils making sufficient progress. Effective measures are being taken to address these issues. These include ensuring continuity of literacy and numeracy teaching through each part-time teacher delivering either all the literacy or numeracy lessons, employing additional teaching assistants, and introducing significant improvements to tracking and target-setting.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' good personal development and well-being are significant strengths of this small school. A strong family ethos is cultivated which ensures that pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes and take pride in their school. Attendance is good and above the national average. The school council provides pupils with good opportunities to influence decision making and they are delighted that their views on environmental issues have been listened to and acted upon in the provision of compost bins and recycling bins. The school helps children develop good healthy eating routines by providing toast, juice, milk and fruit each morning at break time to all pupils. Pupils enjoy regular exercise at break and lunch times in the well resourced play area. Children say that they feel safe in school. The positive relationships which exist in school are built on trust and confidence. Older pupils have a variety of 'buddy' responsibilities which they take very seriously and this is helping to prepare them for future adult

responsibilities. Good team work is fostered through 'response partners' to encourage discussion and the unique opportunities for younger and older children to work and play together in this small school setting. These social skills combine with pupils' academic achievements to prepare pupils well for their next stage of schooling and beyond.

The school has forged very strong links with the local parish church and the vicar visits to take assembly. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good although they have rather limited opportunities to learn about other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall because, although all teaching seen during the inspection was good, it has not yet ensured that good progress has been made over time by all pupils. The teaching too often only ensures good progress for one or two year groups at any one time as teachers are unable to tailor work closely enough to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Evidence from the school's own monitoring of teaching and learning has identified this issue in several lesson observations. Lessons are taught in spacious, newly refurbished classrooms that add to the quality of education. Teachers are beginning to use the computerised whiteboards to make their lessons more interesting. Teaching assistants provide excellent support and contribute positively to the quality of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and at the time of the inspection the school was introducing an exciting new themed, cross-curricular approach. Although this is in its infancy and it is too early to judge its effectiveness, the enthusiasm of staff and pupils is evident. Recent work based around the theme of harvest is reported to have been particularly successful and there is much evidence around school to support this. The school employs a French teacher as part of its cluster partnership with other schools for Key Stage 2 pupils. The personal, social and health education curriculum is currently being reviewed throughout school to ensure that the strong emphasis placed on this area in the Foundation Stage is given a higher priority at Key Stages 1 and 2. The school makes good use of its local farming community to support the curriculum as well as planning visits and residential courses to enhance provision. Pupils have benefited from some short blocks of after-school activities, such as football and hockey.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff are committed to providing good quality care, guidance and support. Pupils and their parents feel that children are looked after extremely well. Child protection

procedures are good. Risk assessments are carried out systematically and reviewed regularly. The school has developed very positive relationships with parents over the past two years and parents report that they are well informed. The school has positive links with other local agencies. Induction procedures are good and children settle quickly into school routines. Transition to a local comprehensive school at the end of Year 6 is carefully planned from a very early stage and pupils begin to make visits for sporting activities as early as Year 1. The school has recently developed systems for more rigorous tracking and target setting and pupils are beginning to be involved in evaluating their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The strong leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school is now in an exciting and rapid phase of development, with a sharp focus on raising standards and improving achievement. The role of subject leaders at middle management level has improved in the last year and is providing effective leadership in the core subjects where subject leaders now have detailed action plans to raise standards. Leadership in the foundation subjects is less well developed. Self-evaluation is at an early stage of development. The school recognises the need to extend self-evaluation to include the views of all interested parties and ensure clear priorities for development are identified, particularly in relation to standards and achievement. The school is developing good systems for gathering and analysing information about the pupils' progress throughout the school and this now needs to be used effectively to evaluate the impact of the schools' work and identify where more needs to be done. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection but some key issues from that time have only recently been remedied.

There is strong confidence amongst all stakeholders in the headteacher's ability to realise their shared vision for the school. Progress so far indicates that the school has a sound capacity to improve, and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

10 November 2006

Dear Children

North Clifton County Primary School, Church Lane, North Clifton, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG23 7AP

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to so many of you and particularly enjoyed my longer discussion with the school council. You have superb classrooms to work in and it was good to see lots of exciting displays of your work around school.

There are many good things about your school and you told me about some of them. Your behaviour is excellent and you all get along well together. Your school is a very happy place and you are good at looking after each other. Your teachers and all the adults in school are good at looking after you too, and you know that you can trust them and tell them if you are worried about anything. You work hard in your lessons and many of you particularly enjoy art and role play. You also enjoy playing outside in the superb play area with lots of exciting equipment to play on. Mrs Medley and all the teachers work hard to make sure that you are happy, that you have exciting lessons, and are helping you to grow up to be responsible adults.

You told me about some things that you would like to improve in your school. I agree that there are some things that could be even better and I have asked Mrs Medley to try and improve a few things. Mrs Medley and the teachers will be trying out some new ways of working to help you even more. There are lots of different ages of children in each class and younger children often need to have different work from the older children. This happens sometimes, but it could be even better. You told me that you enjoyed using the interactive whiteboards and laptops but didn't use them enough. I agree, and so I have recommended that you have more opportunities to use these in all of your lessons.

Keep up your hard work and thank you for making my visit so enjoyable.

Dorothy Bathgate

Her Majesty's Inspector