

Dovecote Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134841
Local Authority	CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
Inspection number	294179
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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

The inspection of the day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where (funded) nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	491
Day care	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ed Williams
Headteacher	Mr Paul Harris
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous day care inspection	1 January 1900
School address	Greencroft Clifton Nottingham NG11 8EY
Telephone number	01159 152953
Fax number	01159 217848

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Inspection number	294179

© 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary and nursery school in a residential suburb on the southern outskirts of Nottingham. About 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is around the national average. The school was created in 2005 when three primary schools on the same campus closed in July, and this school opened in the September as a single amalgamated school. The national tests in 2006 were therefore the first for this school. The number of pupils on roll is declining. Most pupils are White British: no other ethnic group consists of more than one or two pupils in each year. A third of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is higher than the national average, although no pupils currently have statements of special educational need. The headteacher is to retire at Easter 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving at a steady rate, following a period in which it faced considerable difficulties, particularly in the first year after it was formed. Pupils' learning was badly affected by extensive demolition, major building and landscaping work. In addition some year groups moved between premises during the year. Many older pupils from each of the former schools were very averse to the merger of the schools. This showed in their attitudes to the new school, to their new classmates, and to learning. The single new management team, including the newly merged governing body, understandably took some time to get used to its new responsibilities for such a large school. It was not clear how the staff would settle and work together, especially as several key members of staff departed, including all of the literacy coordinators. Taken together, these difficulties led to pupils in Year 6 attaining exceptionally low standards in English, mathematics and science compared with the national average for pupils of their age. Their rate of progress was particularly low.

Through sound leadership and management, the trend is upwards. School leaders have a sound view of each aspect of provision, based on monitoring of teaching and learning, the curriculum and pupils' personal and academic development. The school's self-evaluation, carried out by the senior leadership team working closely with the governing body, is realistic and generally accurate. Inspection findings confirm that the school's view of its own performance is secure. Many good links with other schools, agencies and services do much to improve pupils' learning and their personal development. There are still some things left to do: the pace of learning is improving but it is still only satisfactory. This is because the teaching, although satisfactory overall, varies in quality. Although there are some instances of strong teaching, with pupils learning at a good rate, there are also pockets of weaker teaching. Some teachers do not have secure subject knowledge and allocate too much time for pupils to complete tasks. School leaders are aware of this through their monitoring, but have not yet been fully effective in bringing about all necessary improvements.

Children enter the Foundation Stage classes with skills below the level that is generally expected of children this age, particularly in personal and communication areas. The Foundation Stage unit is good, and children make good progress. Pupils' progress throughout the rest of the school is satisfactory overall, but is dependent on the variable quality of teaching. Test results, school data and inspection findings indicate that standards in English mathematics and science are generally below average. Nevertheless, given their starting points, achievement is sound. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good additional activities to make pupils' learning more interesting and exciting.

What the school has got most right is pupils' personal development. The main thrust of what the school tried to do in the early days was to create a 'one school' atmosphere. In this, school leaders have been very successful. Pupils are happy, and take much pride in their sporting successes across the city; they applaud each other's triumphs, support each other in lessons and through the school council. Pupils have a good awareness of how to be healthy, and they say they feel safe around school. Pupils, parents and carers mention some misbehaviour at times, although pupils say incidents are dealt with promptly. The school's procedures for care and safeguarding pupils, meets statutory requirements. Pupils are increasingly guided and supported well in their work, particularly those who have additional learning needs. Most pupils have a good understanding of their learning targets. They make sound progress in academic subjects, but make good progress in understanding how they can help their community, and

prepare themselves for their next school and future lives. The majority of parents now support the school's aims, and are increasingly helpful, especially through the governors. The school gives sound value for money and demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by improving teachers' subject knowledge.
- Reduce inconsistencies in teaching in order to quicken the pace of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's good progress in the Foundation Stage enables them to enter Year 1 with a positive attitude to learning and the ability to work with each other. Nevertheless, the vast majority do not meet the goals expected for children of this age. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress though Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has largely recovered from the collapse in standards at the end of Year 6 in 2006, when less than half the Year 6 pupils attained the national average, Level 4, in English, and fewer than two thirds attained that standard in mathematics and science. Nationally, more than 30% of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics, but only 6% and 8% did so here.

Pupils are now well on track to achieve their targets in English, mathematics and science. Their targets are challenging, both on an individual level, and for each year group. Targets for the younger pupils are more challenging for each year they are in the school. Indications are that standards are likely to be in line with national average standards within two years. Assessment data indicate that 65% of Year 6 pupils are on track to attain Level 4 in English this year, increasing to 70% for the present Year 5, and 75% for Year 4 by the time they reach the end of Year 6. The expected figures for mathematics and science are about 10% higher in each case.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The emphasis on pupils' personal and social development has successfully created a caring and supportive ethos throughout the school. Pupils are becoming more successful learners with good attitudes towards school. This shows in, for example, their politeness towards visitors. Although generally satisfactory, pupils' behaviour was good during the exciting events of Red Nose Day, taking place during the inspection. The school council provides a good forum for pupils' views to be heard, including, for instance, what characteristics they would like to see in a new headteacher. Pupils' social and moral development is good. It is well supported through lessons, discussions and many good opportunities to take responsibility through activities such as peer mediators and buddies. The pupils' spirituality is well developed through opportunities to wonder at life and the environment in, for example, science and geography lessons. Cultural awareness is well supported through many activities such as art, singing, and history, as well as visits away from school, and visitors from other cultures. Several teams take responsibility for aspects of school life such as the garden or helping the office staff. These responsibilities are taken very seriously and involve pupils in creating job descriptions, applications and interviews. Attendance is below average but the school works very hard in a variety of ways to stress the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and figures are strongly improving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching overall is satisfactory, it is consistently good in the Foundation Stage. It is more variable in Key Stages 1 and 2 where some teaching is good, but there are pockets where it is barely satisfactory. These fluctuations result in learning being only satisfactory overall. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and there is always a clear emphasis placed on the promotion of pupils' personal and social development. Mostly, teachers use good assessment systems to track pupils' progress. Support staff successfully help pupils with learning difficulties to make satisfactory progress.

The most effective teachers plan their lessons carefully, and set clear individual targets that are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers run activities at a good pace, and use a range of methods and resources to engage pupils' interest. In less effective lessons, teachers lack clear knowledge about their subjects. The pace is sometimes slow, making pupils restless, and their attention wanes. Although teachers mostly mark pupils' work regularly, there is scope to improve the feedback to pupils so that they know what they have done well and what needs to be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage curriculum is good: it is particularly well focused on developing social and early communication skills through a wide range of interesting learning activities.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, staff are in the early stages of modifying the curriculum to make it more relevant to the lives of pupils and make clearer links between subjects. All the required subjects are taught, and the curriculum is enhanced well through a range of extra activities and visits that help pupils to enjoy and extend their learning. The school makes good use of the local community, including an artist who visits twice a week, theatre groups, sports coaches, musicians, and residential visits.

Many support programmes are beginning to make a significant impact on raising standards in basic reading and numeracy, including for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Other programmes successfully promote personal and social development, enabling pupils to learn how to stay safe, keep healthy and be good members of their community. Numerous sports, singing and musical activities attract many pupils and make a strong contribution to their learning and enjoyment. The choir and sporting teams are the source of much pride within the school. Children can learn to play a range of musical instruments and can learn Spanish.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very caring nature of the school is recognised by many parents. As one said, 'The school clearly helps children to deal with the emotional complications in their lives.' This is particularly true of the excellent system for supporting some pupils through the support unit known as 'Blocks'. There is also the provision of breakfast snacks and a wide range of social and therapeutic activities.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils' well-being are good and meet statutory requirements. Pupils say that they feel safe and are happy that there are adults they can turn to if they have concerns. The programmes for supporting pupils who have learning difficulties are effective in helping them to make sound progress. Assessment systems are thorough and accurate. The information is used well to identify pupils who would benefit from extra support, and to guide all pupils and set appropriate targets for them. However, feedback to pupils does not always provide pupils with a clear picture of what they have done well and how to further improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Satisfactory leadership and management are seen in the balance of what has been achieved. There has been great success in creating a single large school from three very different ones, each with their own pupils, parents, staff and histories. This did not come immediately: there was a year of settling in, creating a management team and staff structures, planning a curriculum, dealing with many unfinished aspects of the premises, and encouraging pupils to put aside their previous differences. The poor academic standards of 2006 were the casualty of the process. However, the successful development of pupils' positive long-term attitudes to each other and to learning demonstrates what can be achieved.

The monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous to fully identify the exact nature of the weaknesses, and leaders' actions have not been strong enough to quickly raise the standard of teaching across the school. However, a new tier of middle managers is rapidly becoming established, and is increasingly good at organising the teaching within each year group, and within the major subjects, especially English and mathematics. Governors have been immensely supportive in helping the school through its first year. Although governance is sound, governors are not sufficiently aware of standards achieved to challenge or help the school to judge the impact of changes on school performance.

Effectiveness of registered day care

Grade: 2

Dovecotes out of School Clubs provide good quality child care. Children are confident and happy to be involved in the good range of activities provided. However, planning does not give enough consideration to what children of different ages can learn from the activities. Relationships are very good. Children behave well because procedures for managing their behaviour are effective and they respect and trust the adults who care for them. Children of all ages enjoy one another's company. Older children support younger ones and they share equipment and play together co-operatively.

Policies and procedures to keep children safe and secure are rigorous and implemented consistently. Staff are not entirely clear about what to do if an allegation relating to child protection is made against one of them. Children are helped to develop the skills to keep themselves safe by adults who act as good role models and through activities that focus on for example, road safety. Well established routines ensure children understand how basic hygiene, good diet and exercise contribute to leading a healthy lifestyle. They make healthy food choices at breakfast and snack time and enjoy being physically active on the good range of outdoor apparatus.

The partnership with parents is good. The handbook and newsletters provide parents with good information. Staff take the time at the start and end of the day to talk to parents about their children and so have a good knowledge of children's individual needs. Staff are well qualified and additional or update training is regularly completed. Parents' and children's views and suggestions are valued and contribute to the development of the provision made at the clubs.

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration in September 2006.

The school is required to keep a record of complaints about the registered day care made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints about the registered day care other than those made to Ofsted.

Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take into account the following recommendations:

- ensure that the planning of activities takes full account of what children of different ages are can be expected to learn
- ensure all staff know the procedures to be followed if an allegation relating to child protection is made against a member of staff

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	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	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3
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?	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.

Annex A

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

The effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality and standards of the registered day care	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to be healthy?	2
How effective is the day care in protecting children and helping them to stay safe?	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to make a positive contribution?	2
How effectively is the day care organised?	2
Does the day care meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides?	Yes
Has the day care improved since the last inspection?	NA
Does the day care require enforcement action?	No
Does the day care require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

Dovecote Primary and Nursery School, Greencroft, Clifton, Nottingham NG11 8EY

I'm sure you will remember when three inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so polite to us, and helping us to find out what your school is like.

We found that you go to a school that is satisfactory. It has gone through a very rough time since it was created out of the other schools that most of you used to go to. Your learning was disrupted for the first year, and the progress that many of you made was not good enough. The national tests last year showed that Year 6 pupils did very badly compared with other children throughout the country, especially in English. However, with all the hard work that your teachers and Mr. Harris have put in, the most difficult days are over. The school's leaders and governors are doing a sound job and are looking forward to the future with confidence. The buildings are finished, and the teachers are settled. Their teaching is mostly sound, and some lessons are good and interesting. Most importantly, you and your parents and carers feel settled. You rightly take pride in your new school and all the things that are going on there. Staff look after your interests well, both in making sure you are safe, and in guiding and supporting your learning. You learn a sound range of subjects, and get the help you need. Some of you told us that there is some bad behaviour, including bullying in the playground, but that you feel able to talk with teachers if you have personal problems. You also told us that you like the different things you do now, and, as one of you said, 'I've got lots more friends now than I used to have.'

Everything has not been finished yet: we are asking the school to do more to help you to do better in English, mathematics and science. As part of this, we think that the school's leaders should do more to see what is happening in classes, and do more to help teachers to make their teaching better.

Our best wishes go to you and your school and to Mr. Harris in his retirement.

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector