

Cottesbrooke Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103280
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308272
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Smart
Headteacher	Pearl Jones
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001
School address	Cedars Avenue Birmingham B27 6JL
Telephone number	0121 4643178
Fax number	0121 4643786

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a culturally diverse area of Birmingham. A high proportion of pupils comes from minority ethnic backgrounds and many pupils do not speak English as their first language. A small number of pupils are learning English for the first time. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. When the school was previously inspected, it was given a Notice to Improve as significant improvement was required in pupils' standards and achievement, especially in mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Cottesbrooke provides its pupils with a satisfactory education and there are clear indications that it can get even better. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory, but key to the recent improvement is the good leadership and management of the headteacher. She is supported well by senior staff, provides clear direction, and is very clear about strengths and weaknesses of provision. Effective systems have been introduced to improve teaching and learning, resulting in standards rising to broadly average in reading, mathematics and science. Writing standards remain below average however, as there is still work to do in improving pupils' punctuation, grammar, spelling and handwriting skills. The inadequate progress in English, mathematics and science identified in the previous inspection has been rectified, and achievement is now satisfactory.

Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled effectively, and teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. Although there is some good teaching, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good enough. This is because expectations of what pupils are able to do, including the presentation of their work, are not always sufficiently high. All staff are trying hard to involve pupils in lessons by sharing learning intentions and discussing how they might achieve success in their work. However, this is not yet consistent in all lessons. The systems for tracking progress are good and information from assessment is used satisfactorily to set targets for improvement. Some teachers mark pupils' work well, but marking is not used consistently to inform pupils about how to improve their work. A strength of teaching however, is the way staff encourage pupils to share ideas and learn from each other. This development of team working skills, together with pupils' improving standards in basic literacy and numeracy, and adequate information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Relationships throughout the school are good. As one pupil typically said, 'Teachers are kind and helpful. I love seeing their faces when I get something right!' High priority is given to pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and pastoral care and support are good. The result of this can be seen in pupils' positive attitudes to school. Pupils attend regularly, behave well, and work effectively together. They feel safe knowing staff will listen to them if they have a problem. Teaching assistants care well for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and give particularly good, targeted support to those who are learning English for the first time. Parents are pleased with the way the school looks after and cares for their children, and the school works effectively with a variety of support agencies to promote the well-being of all pupils.

Improving standards means the curriculum now more effectively meets the learning needs of pupils, but the leadership knows as yet it does not engage the interest of all pupils. Pupils themselves say, 'We would like more fun in lessons and have more lessons in subjects that interest us, such art and music.' With improving standards and achievement and the determination of the headteacher and staff not to stand still, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation to raise standards in writing.

- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, making sure the intended learning is made clear and marking consistently informs them how to improve their work.
- Develop a curriculum that engages the interest of all pupils. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has worked hard to raise standards since the previous inspection. Year 6 pupils' performance in the 2007 National Curriculum tests saw improving standards in English, mathematics and science. Mathematics and science standards were broadly average. In English, standards remained below average, but this was because of weaker writing attainment as reading standards were broadly average. More effective teaching and learning mean the legacy of underachievement is being eliminated and standards are now broadly average throughout the school. This represents satisfactory achievement from when pupils enter school in Year 3 with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Writing remains a weaker element of pupils' attainment and there is still work to do in improving punctuation, grammar, spelling and handwriting skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. However, those pupils who are learning English for the first time make good progress because of good targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school, having good attitudes towards learning. This is reflected in their improved attendance, which is now broadly average. They like their teachers and friends. As one pupil typically commented, 'School is a good place to be where everyone is kind and helpful.' Pupils are polite and well behaved in and around school, and have a strong sense of right and wrong. They know how to keep themselves safe, knowing the dangers of smoking, drugs and speaking to strangers.

Pupils understand the importance of taking regular exercise and eating healthily, although they do not always use this understanding when choosing their own food. In addition, some pupils say, 'We do not have enough opportunities for exercise through sporting activities outside of the school day.' Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school and the community. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously, although they are disappointed their recommendations are not always acted upon. They are enthusiastic in helping others by collecting for national and local charities, such as Comic Relief and a local children's hospital.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved and this is the main reason why standards are rising. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and as a result there is a calm, orderly and positive climate for learning. Literacy and numeracy lessons are lively sessions where a variety of resources, such as music, video and ICT, is used well to engage pupils' interest. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' involvement with strategies such as 'talking partners' ensuring all

contribute their ideas. Although there is good practice evident, not all teachers make it sufficiently clear to pupils what they are expected to learn in lessons. Also, in some classes, expectations are high, whilst in others the expectations of the amount of work that pupils are able to do and of presentation are not high enough. Teaching assistants effectively ensure that those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English for the first time are included in all activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, whilst meeting statutory requirements, does not fully engage the interests of all pupils. The school rightly recognises that the curriculum is not sufficiently vibrant and stimulating and a start has been made with taster lessons in French and Italian, which pupils say they enjoy. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to implement English, mathematics and science programmes of work that more effectively match the range of pupils' learning needs. In this, there has been success and standards and achievement are improving. Strategies such as 'Big Writing' are proving successful in raising standards in pupils' writing techniques, but there is still work to do in improving pupils' basic writing skills. Overall, the range of after school activities and other opportunities to enrich the curriculum is good, although the choice of physical activities is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral guidance is good and pupils are well cared for. Health and safety procedures are firmly in place and reviewed regularly. Effective systems support and encourage pupils' regular attendance, and the school is proactive in supporting pupils to manage their own behaviour. Pupils say they can talk to any adult if they have concerns and the family liaison worker and learning mentor are used well to support pupils with emotional and social problems. The progress and welfare of these pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored effectively and sensitively.

Procedures for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress are good and information is effectively analysed and evaluated so targets for learning in English, mathematics and science can be identified. However, these targets, until very recently, have not been specific enough and, consequently, have not helped pupils to progress as well as they could. Some marking provides helpful pointers for improvement and is linked to improvement targets, but this is not consistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has established a clear sense of purpose focused on raising standards. The recently formed leadership team works well together and is rapidly becoming an effective force for improvement. This is seen in improving standards, particularly in mathematics and science. Monitoring and evaluation is thorough and systems introduced since the previous inspection are starting to influence provision and pupils' achievement. These include a good tracking system to check on pupils' progress, and a programme of robust procedures for improving the quality of teaching. As a result, there is a good awareness of where improvements are necessary

and the unsatisfactory teaching that was present in the previous inspection is no longer evident. Although the senior leadership is clear about improvement, the leadership of subjects such as art, music and the humanities is not yet fully developed. Governors meet regularly and are supportive of the school. However, they accept there is a need for more involvement in holding the school to account for its work.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

21 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Cottesbrooke Junior School, Birmingham, B27 6JL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed speaking to you and finding out about your school. We are pleased to tell you that your school has improved since the last inspection and it is now satisfactory. Because of the hard work of the headteacher and staff, standards have improved and achievement is satisfactory. Most of you are attaining standards that are expected for your age in reading, mathematics and science.

- What we liked most about your school.
- Your headteacher and staff have good ideas about how to make things better for you.
- Teachers try hard to make sure you all have the opportunity to talk about your ideas. We think sharing ideas with a partner is really good and helps you learn. You all get on well together and it is good to know you think adults in school will always help you.
- You behave well and it is clear that you enjoy coming to school.
- We think teaching assistants do a good job in making sure all of you can join in lessons.
- We are pleased your parents think you are well cared for and are safe. What we have asked your school to do now.
- Improve your skills in writing to help you reach better standards in English.
- Make sure teachers always expect you to do your best, make sure you are clear about what you are learning, and know how to make your work even better.
- Develop a curriculum that is interesting, exciting and fun.

You can help the school to get even better by thinking carefully about how you can improve your writing and follow teachers' advice about how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness Lead inspector

21 January 2008

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Lois Furness
Lead inspector