

New Town Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109785
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310094
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Christine Borgars
Headteacher	Miss Linda Sujeewon
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	School Terrace Reading RG1 3LS
Telephone number	0118 901 5509
Fax number	0118 901 5510

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2008
Inspection number	310094

© Crown copyright 2008

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 urban primary school is of above average size. Around three-quarters of the pupils enter at an early stage of learning English, a significantly higher proportion than nationally. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need are above average. Fewer than average are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). The number of pupils entering or leaving the school at times other than normal is far higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

New Town is a good school where all pupils are helped to become successful, very well-behaved, confident learners. Parents are very supportive. 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds' commented one. The school works well with a wide range of partners to improve pupils' aspirations and self-confidence and to enable them to achieve their full potential. The good leadership of the headteacher, supported by capable senior managers, rightly recognises that pupils in this community can be effective learners if parents are involved, and if personal skills are developed and nurtured in a caring, happy and safe environment.

One result is pupils' outstanding personal development, reflected in their infectious enthusiasm for all that the school has to offer. They fully understand how they can stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and become responsible, caring members of their school and local community. The good emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is providing them with necessary skills to be life-long learners. Pupils have an excellent understanding about other religions and cultures so they are particularly well prepared for the diversity of life in British society.

Pupils achieve well considering that the majority start school with skills and abilities which are below those expected for their age. The interesting curriculum they enjoy, and good care, guidance and support, assist in this. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The Foundation Stage works in partnership with parents to support the many children at an early stage of learning English. Their work is so good that it has been recognised by outside agencies in making a 'good practice' film.

Progress has been consistently good in Years 3–6 for some years, and this is still the case. In Years 1 and 2 in previous years, it has been satisfactory and standards were well below average. Following recent improvements in teaching and learning, using improved assessment and techniques to help pupils learn more effectively, it is now also good. Planning for the more able pupils, whilst good overall, is not fully consistent across the school. This means that, just occasionally, these pupils are insufficiently challenged, and when this happens, their progress slows.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, but some are less informed about how to carry out their role in relation to aspects for which they are responsible. The confidence that the vast majority of parents have in the headteacher and management of the school is well placed. The improvements made since the last inspection, and recent initiatives to raise standards in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, and the teamwork evident, all show that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good start to children's learning. Consistently good teaching results in the children progressing well. Good liaison with parents means that children settle happily into the Nursery, quickly learning the routines and how to act independently. Experienced staff plan carefully to promote these and other qualities through imaginative and interesting activities. Leadership is good; it is particularly skilled in dealing with children who have English as an additional language (EAL). Strategies to raise standards in the Foundation Stage, introduced since the last inspection, are working well, but the lack of canopies for the outdoor

areas in Nursery and Reception restricts access to outdoor learning opportunities. The accommodation is good overall. In the Reception class, children are introduced to the structured learning of sounds and letters and this is proving highly successful in raising standards. Some children can write and punctuate whole sentences independently. Most now reach the expected early learning goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop precision and consistency in lesson planning so that all groups, including high attainers, achieve as well as they can.
- Provide covers in the outdoor areas to enable children in the Foundation Stage to engage in outdoor activities more often.
- Improve governors' awareness of the detail of their roles and responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are average; progress is now good at all stages. In the current Year 2, inspection evidence shows that standards are now broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. The good progress continues in Key Stage 2, from standards that were below average on entry to Year 3, and the majority of pupils in Year 6 reach the expected level in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with LDD receive good support and, as a result, they make good progress. The progress of pupils with EAL is good because teachers are particularly skilled in this area. Recently the school has introduced strategies to increase the number of higher levels achieved, but the impact is uneven because a consistent planning approach for the more able is not yet in place.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate that they enjoy school immensely, through their excellent behaviour, their great enthusiasm in joining in with all that the school has to offer and increasingly, through good attendance. Pupils are highly considerate of one another and very welcoming to visitors. As one pupil said, 'This is a very friendly school where you make friends quickly'. Pupils confidently explain why it is important to eat and drink sensibly and their love of exercise is demonstrated by their enthusiastic participation in sports clubs and use of the outdoor climbing apparatus. Their genuine interest in and respect for their friends' rich variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds contribute greatly to the very harmonious school community. Pupils contribute fully to school life by diligently carrying out a range of roles. One school councillor said, 'We often come up with good ideas and the adults use them to make our school even better'. Recent examples include having pupil leaders in the playground and making the library an attractive, comfortable place to enjoy reading by raising the necessary funds. Pupils' progress in their key subjects prepares them well for their futures. So also does their teamwork when organising charity appeals and recycling projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The best teaching was seen in Key Stage 2, contributing particularly well to pupils' excellent personal development, and helping them achieve well. As a consequence of a range of successful strategies, Key Stage 1 teaching is improving and is now mostly good. The best lessons include imaginative tasks matched to the various abilities. This results in pupils really wanting to learn, 'Even when it's time for play!' as one remarked. Clearly-explained learning objectives and a brisk pace maintain interest. Pertinent questioning invigorates lessons and makes pupils think. Teachers know exactly how each pupil is progressing in literacy and numeracy because the assessment system provides a detailed picture. Marking is sometimes good but does not always offer clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work. All groups are catered for. Teaching for pupils with EAL is particularly effective because staff understand their needs especially well. Providing challenge for the more able is often good but is inconsistent, affecting progress for these pupils in some lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' strong personal development and prepares them well for their futures. The tailored programme of visits and visitors to the school, including religious leaders, artists and musicians, supports classroom learning well in an approach that motivates and inspires pupils to learn. ICT provision has improved since the last inspection, benefiting from coordinated planning. Pupils enjoy the many clubs on offer. Some excellent displays adorn the school, including cross-curricular work, a current development focus. Provision for the many pupils in the early stages of learning English is finely tuned to their needs. Work with outside agencies and parents is integrated well so that the curriculum is highly inclusive. Pupils who find learning difficult are identified well; their learning targets are appropriate to their needs though sometimes too broad to provide clear guidance for lesson planning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures to assure health and safety are well organised and staff are well-trained. They know their pupils well. As a result, pupils are happy in school, feel secure and are encouraged to respect one another and give a helping hand. All safeguarding requirements are in place. The school works closely with parents to ensure that pupils settle in quickly, including the large number arriving at the school other than in the Foundation Stage. Work with the relevant agencies to support pupils who arrive at an early stage of learning to speak English is particularly successful. The system for recording each pupil's progress enables staff to identify and help those falling behind their targets in literacy and numeracy, though it is not yet developed for other subjects. Assessment information is not always presented in the most helpful way, so its use is more time consuming for teachers than it needs to be. The school has plans in hand to tackle this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Supported well by the clear direction and highly analytical leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team is empowered by the developing ethos of shared leadership. It is focused on pupils' personal development and strengthening links with parents as key routes to raising standards and this is resulting in pupils' good progress. Subject leaders also work as a strong team to implement improvements. This new approach is beginning to move the school forward well. Monitoring of the teaching and learning is effective. More rigour and consistency are being introduced to evaluate performance and ensure that all pupils meet the challenging targets set. Attention is now being paid to making the system more manageable to use. Strategies to improve the achievement of those groups that had been doing less well are well thought out. Governance is sound. The self evaluation form is a clear and analytical document, with its detail correctly focused on the benefits for pupils. The school improvement plan similarly reflects well-focused priorities. It is not surprising that almost all parents voice their support for the school and its management.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	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	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

27 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of New Town Primary School, Reading, RG1 3LS

Thank you so much for the very friendly way you welcomed us to your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you, especially the school council. It was so good to hear how valued and proud you feel because you are making a difference to your school.

We were so pleased to see how very well behaved you are, how much you enjoy school and how hard you try to attend school regularly and on time. You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and fit.

All of you know a lot about the way your school friends live. We really like the way you listen to each other with such interest when your friends talk about their families, and different foods and religious ceremonies.

You make good progress in your learning. We could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that most of you are reaching or are close to reaching the standards expected of you in reading, writing, mathematics and science. With a little bit more help from your teachers you will do even better.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your teachers to give some of you some harder work more regularly. We think some of you could do with a bit more challenge. We think that will help you to do better. We have asked the governors of your school to check up a bit more often about the things for which they are responsible. You know how bright and welcoming the little ones' outside areas are? It's such a pity they can't play and learn outside when it's wet. We have asked your school to put up some canopies for when the weather's bad, so that the outside areas can be used all the time.

You go to a good school where your headteacher and teachers make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. We hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead Inspector