

Godolphin Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109917
Local Authority	Slough
Inspection number	310140
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Deborah May
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Clark
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Oatlands Drive Slough SL1 3HS
Telephone number	01753 521481
Fax number	01753 552630

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Godolphin Junior is a large school serving a culturally and socially diverse community. There are some pockets of social disadvantage, as evidenced by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is about twice the national average. Almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest of these, comprising over half the school roll, is the pupils of Pakistani heritage. However, there are few pupils who are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is high. Currently, about 40% of pupils come into this category. However, the proportion with more severe difficulties, including those with statements of special educational need, is about average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Godolphin is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features, mostly relating to the pastoral care provided for pupils and their personal development and well-being. It also makes excellent use of its many links within the community to enrich the curriculum provided for its pupils.

Standards are rising. Pupils are making good progress as they move through the school from well below average starting points in Year 3 to reach standards that are close to the national average at the end of Year 6. This improvement is recent, and stems from the good use made of information gathered through the rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress by the headteacher, deputy head and assistant head. The excellent leadership shown by the strategic leadership team has been instrumental in the success of the drive to improve achievement and raise standards.

An important contributory factor to the school's effectiveness is the excellent standard of pupils' social development. This stems from the outstanding pastoral care provided for all. Particularly noteworthy is the outstanding commitment shown by pupils to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils' good behaviour contributes to the good climate for learning found in most classes. Pupils have good attitudes towards their education and enjoy being at school.

This is an inclusive school in which each child matters. All pupils are warmly welcomed and equally valued. An excellent feature is the way in which the school rapidly integrates newcomers, some of whom have little English, into the school community and enables them to play a full part in all activities. Also excellent are the systems for assessing pupils' needs and checking on the progress that they make. The teaching is good overall; however, there are inconsistencies. In most classes, teachers make good use of the information gathered about pupils to provide achievable challenges and to plan interesting and exciting activities. Consequently, pupils learn well. In contrast, teaching in a few classes is not challenging enough because the curriculum is not adapted well enough to pupils' needs. Where this occurs, the pupils' progress slows.

The outstanding day-to-day care provided for pupils is a feature of the school that is particularly appreciated by parents; as one commented, 'I think the school should have grade 1 for the work it does in looking after and understanding the children's needs.' The academic guidance provided for pupils is good overall. However, the quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and reflects the variation in the quality of teaching.

Overall, the leadership provided at all levels is good, and helps ensure that pupils achieve well. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a very strong commitment to continuous improvement and robust systems to help ensure that this happens. Despite the inconsistencies found in its provision, the school is well placed to make further progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teaching, the delivery of the curriculum and the marking of pupils' work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In previous years, the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 have been either below or well below the national average in English and science. In mathematics they have been persistently well below average. This occurred because the more able pupils did not reach the standards expected of them, girls generally did not achieve well, and in mathematics, pupils' skills in solving problems were weak. The clear course of action taken by senior management has turned the situation around. There has been a strong focus on the identification of the more able pupils and the provision of work to challenge them. Strategies to improve the attainment of girls have included work to raise their self-esteem and targeted questioning in lessons to help ensure that boys do not dominate discussions. In mathematics, there has been a strong focus on developing pupils' thinking skills. The success of this raft of measures is now being seen in the improved attainment of all pupils. In Years 5 and 6, for example, the standard of work seen in the highest attaining groups for English, mathematics and science is securely above the levels expected nationally for pupils of these ages. Girls are now doing well, and in most cases mirror national trends by outperforming boys.

In Years 3 and 4 in particular, progress varies from class to class, reflecting the inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching. However, the pupils in Year 6 generally make the most rapid progress. Throughout the school, the pupils with LDD make good progress because of the clear structures provided by teachers to help them develop their basic skills, and the good quality extra help they are given in lessons. Those in the early stages of learning English also benefit from the skilled help that they receive and make extremely rapid progress to quickly reach a level at which they can make useful contributions in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils respond very well to clear rules about how to conduct themselves, so that lessons are not disrupted and playtimes are enjoyed by all. As one Year 6 girl said, 'I think everyone enjoys being in school when I see the way they work and behave.' Attendance rates are around the national average and unauthorised absence is low. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the very clear guidance on leading healthy lifestyles provided for them, and understand clearly the need to keep fit. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Particular strengths are the social skills shown by pupils and their spiritual development provided through opportunities to reflect on their learning. Pupils also develop a keen sense of responsibility for others and their surroundings. For example, they help keep the premises tidy without any bidding from adults. They take their responsibilities seriously, such as being playtime 'buddies', school councillors or 'eco-warriors'. By the end of Year 6 pupils can generally be trusted to do the right thing. They become outgoing and understand the need to work as a team. In conjunction with their good progress in developing their basic skills, these qualities help prepare them well for the next phase of their education and a future as life-long learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers work hard to develop positive attitudes towards learning by their pupils. Lively activities and discussions help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used well to involve pupils in lessons, particularly those learning English as an additional language. In the vast majority of lessons teachers use assessment well to identify clear learning objectives and to plan achievable challenges. In most lessons, teachers manage their pupils well. However, sometimes teachers' expectations of their pupils are too low, and the tasks set for pupils are mundane. When this occurs, pupils' behaviour deteriorates and progress slows.

A recent initiative to promote teachers' use of open-ended questions has helped pupils to make connections and apply their learning. Pupils, particularly the more able, make most progress when challenged to develop reasoned arguments to justify their views. Thinking skills are well developed in Year 6 and contribute to pupils' good progress. The school is aware that boys invariably respond more readily to questions than girls. However, girls make a greater contribution in lessons where teachers target their questions at individuals rather than asking pupils to raise their hands if they wish to respond. This helps them to make better progress. This practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad curriculum, with a clear focus on raising attainment in English and mathematics. Pupils' response to the curriculum is carefully monitored to identify where improvements are needed to help match the curriculum more closely to their needs. A recent initiative involves a network of schools collaborating to establish clear progression in the teaching of written and mental calculation in mathematics. This has helped raise the attainment of younger and lower attaining pupils. More recently, an initiative to promote pupils' thinking skills has enabled pupils to apply their learning in mathematics and science. This is enabling more pupils to achieve at a higher level. Teachers are developing links between subjects to make learning more meaningful for pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to conduct research and to enhance writing for the older pupils, thus promoting independent working. A communications project encourages younger pupils to use ICT to exchange ideas on a range of issues. This helps them to develop their literacy skills. Although all these initiatives are helping to raise the attainment of pupils, they are not implemented consistently across the school so that all pupils may benefit. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of clubs, including a variety of sports activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes excellent care of its pupils because procedures are diligent and thorough. Proper security checks are made of all adults who come in frequent contact with pupils. Behaviour is closely monitored and any persistent or serious misbehaviour is managed well. Good use is made of the expertise of outside agencies.

Teachers make good use of assessment information to set specific targets. These help pupils focus on the next steps in their learning. The school is starting to involve pupils in assessing their own work and that of others. This is particularly effective when teachers provide pupils with checklists to help them identify what they are doing well and where they need to improve. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. There are some good examples of marking, which give pupils a clear idea of what they have achieved. Most teachers write comments to help pupils to improve their work, but this is not the case in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

High quality teamwork and the sensitive management of personnel have enabled the headteacher and her senior managers to bring about significant improvements in the school. Nonetheless, senior management recognises that more work is to be done to help eliminate the inconsistencies in teaching and learning and the curriculum. Leaders at all levels successfully focus on improving the quality of provision. The school's monitoring of teaching and learning, including the close tracking of pupils' progress, has brought about good improvement. Staff are deployed astutely and provision for professional development is very well targeted. A great deal has been done to promote cohesion within the school community and there is a strong commitment to ensuring that all its pupils' needs are met.

Governance is good and this is an area where significant improvement has been made since the last inspection. Governors work hard to support the school, have a good understanding of the issues facing the school, and are good at holding it to account.

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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
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?	1
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

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	1
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

11 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Godolphin Junior School, Slough, SL1 3HS

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work.

Your parents think that you go to a good school, and we agree. Here is a list of some of the other things we like.

- You make good progress.
- You all follow the values your school teaches you. Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming, and you behave well.
- Most often, you learn well in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- Your school has some excellent partnerships with other schools and local businesses which help make your lessons more interesting.
- Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing a good job.

Every school has something that could be better, so this is what we have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to learn more.

- We would like your school to make sure that more of your lessons really make you think hard. I'm sure that you are ready for this challenge! We would also like the school to make sure that the good ideas that some teachers use to plan their lessons and make your work more interesting, are used in all classes. We also noticed that most of your teachers make really helpful comments when they mark your work. We would like to see this happen in all classes.

With best wishes for your future success,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector