

Katesgrove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109920
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310141
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gill Godfrey
Headteacher	Mr James Robert Telling
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
School address	Dorothy Street Reading RG1 2NL
Telephone number	01189 015490
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. About a quarter of pupils are White British. Others come from a wide range of backgrounds, and many pupils have an Asian (mainly Pakistani) heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. Learning difficulties are mostly moderate learning difficulties or emotional, behavioural or social difficulties. Many more pupils than is typical move in and out of the school at other than usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement and in the provision for science.

Katesgrove School is improving but more remains to be done before pupils all reach the academic standards of which they are capable. The headteacher, staff and governors are working with clear vision, enthusiasm and determination, to overcome the legacy of underachievement that arose from past shortcomings in educational provision and from many staff changes. Staffing is now more stable and teamwork is strong. Whilst pupils are now making satisfactory progress in most lessons, achievement over the longer term, and in all year groups, is not yet adequate.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are extremely polite and helpful and they behave well. They enjoy school greatly, cooperate very effectively with each other and staff, and benefit in many ways from the fact so many nations are represented in their number. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community.

The rate of pupils' progress over Years 3 to 6 went down markedly from good in 2005 to inadequate in 2007. In the 2007 national tests in Year 6, standards were below average in English and mathematics and exceptionally low in science. Improvement since the last inspection, based on the 2007 test results, has been limited in terms of raising pupils' standards and achievement. Current work, however, shows that the previously downward trend in the rate of pupils' achievement is being reversed. Many good systems exist for recording and analysing pupils' attainment and these are helping the school keep a close check on how well pupils are making progress in English and mathematics. Children make a good start to school in the Foundation Stage.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but varies considerably in relation to teachers' skills in engaging pupils fully and in gauging their grasp of new material. Some lessons are good but because this is not always the case, pupils' progress is uneven across the school. Good extra support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those at an early stage of learning English. As a result, these pupils make satisfactory progress. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in many ways. The curriculum is satisfactory. It has good features in that it promotes well pupils' personal development but it has relative weaknesses in science. The school provides good care and support for pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory overall. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve as seen in its very honest and accurate evaluations of its own effectiveness, and in the positive impact of some actions taken to raise standards. There are some strengths in governance, and in senior leadership but middle management is not consistently strong; not all post-holders give sufficient attention to ensuring pupils' good progress in their areas.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are much lower than those typical for children of their ages. Partnership with parents of children at this stage is strong and encourages parents to support their children's learning in various ways. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Good assessment of children's attainment on entry, together with good induction procedures, enable teachers to plan effectively and meet individual needs. Clear and well-established routines mean that children feel secure and grow in confidence. Phonics sessions are an integral part of learning. Children make particularly good progress in speaking and listening. They have many opportunities for engaging in early reading, writing and number activities. Whilst many children attain the goals expected at the end of the Foundation Stage, attainment is still below expectations overall. Since the last inspection, outdoor facilities have improved. Learning in both the indoor and outdoor classrooms allows for a good blend of teacher directed tasks and those that children choose for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen some teachers' skills in: engaging all pupils more fully; checking pupils' grasp of new material through effective questioning and other means: and in helping pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Improve the curriculum for science by ensuring that topics are covered to greater depth and that learning in science develops progressively over each key stage.
- Ensure that middle leadership and management are of uniformly high quality in relation to the checking of pupils' progress: in particular, strengthen subject leadership in science and develop further the roles of subject leaders in non-core subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In 2007, results in the national tests in Year 2 were significantly lower than average. They were better in mathematics than in reading and writing. Results in the Year 6 tests in 2007 were below average in English and mathematics and exceptionally low in science. Results showed that pupils' progress was inadequate over Years 3 to 6. Progress in science was extremely low.

Shortcomings in educational provision in the past, and some existing ones, have left a legacy of underachievement particularly for older pupils. There are signs of improvement, however, in that the rates of pupils' progress are being speeded up in some key areas, notably in English and mathematics. Current standards in both Years 2 and 6 are significantly better than those in 2007. Pupils' progress in lessons is generally satisfactory but it is uneven across the school and dependent on the quality of teaching. Progress in science is inadequate because the science curriculum is not covered systematically or at great depth. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory because of the extra help they are given to meet their specific needs. Pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress in acquiring the language because of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is calm and harmonious. Pupils are friendly and welcoming and get on very well with each other and their teachers and helpers. They enjoy coming to school very much and say that they trust adults to treat them fairly. Pupils want to learn and they have positive attitudes to their work, often working well in groups over specific projects such as creating real or miniature gardens. They show interest in their work in most lessons and their behaviour is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. From the Foundation Stage, children grow well in confidence and in understanding of each other's needs, feelings, customs and beliefs. Displays of children's work on topics like 'Who am I?', the recycling of materials, and on artists being studied are pointed to by pupils as helping them to understand the world and their contributions to it. Pupils have a sound awareness of the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They are reasonably well prepared to lead healthy lives and for their next stages in learning. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe because staff nurture this well. The school council is beginning to make its voice heard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Strong relationships, good classroom management, and pupils' positive attitudes to learning are visible throughout the school. Lessons start briskly and are generally enjoyed by pupils although concentration drifts in some lessons where the teacher does not engage all pupils fully. Whilst some good lessons exist, a greater proportion is needed to raise standards more quickly and make sure that, in all year groups, pupils are working at expected levels for their ages and starting points.

Progress in some classes has been good this year. There is considerable variability, however, in the extent to which teachers: ensure fast pace; encourage pupils to speak at length and to assess their own work; check frequently on pupils' grasp of new material, and provide challenge to those who find work easy. Learning in science is sporadic. The teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is often good and supported well by able teaching assistants. Classrooms are pleasant and teachers have worked hard to create stimulating displays. Teachers model good cursive handwriting and pupils take pride in presenting their work well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has some good features in that it promotes well pupils' personal development. Provision for English and mathematics is sound and kept under review. Provision in science, however, does not ensure that pupils learn the subject at depth. Work in science is rather piecemeal even though the overall curriculum plan lays out clearly the school's long-term programme for science. The school makes good provision for pupils who have particular learning needs. This includes a range of strategies including group and individual tuition and sessions to improve social and communication skills and to raise self-esteem.

The school is trialling a system of 'rotations' that involves themed approaches to learning that link subjects. Pupils say they enjoy the varied activities and this style of learning. The impact of this strategy on raising standards has yet to be evaluated. Some good outcomes of the

'rotation' work were seen in design and technology and geography, both in terms of what pupils produced and in the way that they discussed their plans and approaches to problem solving. Pupils talked extensively about their current project based on gardens, for example, and their visit to the Look Out Discovery Centre in Bracknell. The curriculum is enriched through visits to the local library, for example, and other places of interest, and by visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has robust systems to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being. The school successfully promotes an atmosphere in which pupils gain in confidence and respect for others. Pupils' views are heard and acted upon. Good attendance is celebrated, and absences are followed up swiftly. Despite this, unauthorised absence by a small number of pupils who go on extended holidays continues to be a problem.

The headteacher has developed good systems to record and analyse pupils' attainment and progress, and these are having a positive impact on raising standards and achievement. In English, pupils have clear individual targets but this does not apply to the same extent in other subjects. Day-to-day assessments by teachers, coupled with good advice to pupils on how to improve their work, are variable in quality with very good work in some classes contrasting with limited work elsewhere. The school works in good partnership with outside agencies to provide support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The team spirit in the school is uplifting and staff and governors are working with determination and clarity of purpose to raise standards and achievement. They know that the work of bringing pupil's achievement up to at least satisfactory levels is not yet complete. Parents are generally supportive of the school and the school has some good links with them although these are not as extensive as they might be. The school has faced some turbulence in the last several years, with many staff changes. Standards have not risen as hoped since the last inspection and the rate of pupils' progress went down markedly in 2007. The action taken by the school in the last two years is showing a positive impact. Not enough has been done, however, to improve provision in science or to ensure that the leadership of this subject is at least satisfactory.

The headteacher has the confidence of the school community. He has particular strengths in encouraging and supporting staff and pupils, and in the collation and analysis of data on pupils' attainment. He is ably supported by the deputy head. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well. There is much variability in the effectiveness of middle leaders and managers and the school has yet to even out their performance, in driving up standards, across subjects and Key Stages.

Governance is satisfactory overall and has many good features in providing both support and challenge to senior staff. Governors and staff, with the school bursar taking an important lead, are working hard to improve the overall quality of the school's accommodation. Accommodation is showing signs of age although much has been done to refresh it and enhance many areas including the outdoor spaces for recreation and learning. The costs of maintaining the site and buildings, however, put a pressure on the school's budget. The school is rightly proud of its Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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 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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Katesgrove Primary School, Reading, RG1 2NL

Thank you all for being so welcoming, polite and helpful when inspectors visited your school. We were glad to talk with many of you in lessons and in break times and to members of the School Council. You clearly enjoy being at school. I write to tell you about our findings.

These are the best things about your school.

- You are well behaved and helped to grow as confident, caring young people, very aware of how to treat each other and the world with respect.
- Children in the reception class settle in quickly and make a good start to school.
- The adults in the school take good care of you and help you to learn how to stay safe and healthy.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and in some lessons they are good. This means that the school is speeding up your rates of progress which were not as good as they might have been in the last year or so.
- Your headteacher, the deputy head, the staff and governors know clearly what the school is already doing well and what needs to be improved.

Here are the main ways in which the school could improve even further.

- In some classes, teachers should check more closely how well you understand your work and give you more advice about how to improve it.
- You should have more opportunities to do more work in science and to build up your understanding of science regularly and thoroughly.
- Some teachers need to develop their skill in leading subjects and in checking on the progress of groups of pupils.

Although the school is speeding up your progress, more needs to be done before all pupils are reaching the standards they are capable of. The school is being given a Notice to Improve. This means that inspectors will come back next year and see how well the school is doing. We ask you to make sure that you all come to school regularly, work hard, and ask for help when you need it to do your best.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector