

Newtown Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110217
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310222
Inspection date	8 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Shaw
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Berkhampstead Road Chesham HP5 3AT
Telephone number	01494 783713
Fax number	01494 783713

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the progress of groups of pupils, and the impact of changes in provision and curriculum in the school. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' assessments, discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and the chair of governors, observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an infant school with a nursery. The pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds; the majority are White British and a quarter are of Pakistani heritage. Around a quarter of pupils are learning English as an additional language and are often at early stages in this when they join the Foundation Stage or school. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most of these pupils have difficulties with communication and language or more complex physical disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Newtown Infant School is a happy school at the heart of its local community. It provides its pupils from all backgrounds with a good education. As a result, they make good progress in developing their academic and personal skills from their varied starting points. Parents comment approvingly on its 'inclusive and caring ethos which helps each individual child to achieve their own potential'. The school's very warm relationship with parents is one example of the excellent partnerships it has developed to support pupils' good personal development and well-being. Another is its partnerships with other schools and agencies which develop pupils' physical skills and talents well. A third is its relationship with the local community, the strength of which was demonstrated by the local support it received when it was threatened with possible closure in 2006.

Good teaching and an interesting and varied curriculum helps pupils to achieve well. The curriculum includes a wide range of enjoyable opportunities for pupils to extend their personal and social skills, such as a residential trip for the oldest pupils. Pupils enjoy taking part in the many extra activities which the school offers. These include a Bible club and a Faith club where pupils can find out more about Christianity and Islam. Such opportunities help pupils make excellent gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they go through the school. Pupils really enjoy helping each other and the school and taking on responsibilities such as representing others through the school council. These opportunities help children to mature and prepare them well for their next steps in education.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are a little below average, however this represents good progress from pupils' starting points. The school's good leadership and management has been working hard to improve standards and to ensure that all pupils make good or better progress. The close monitoring of pupils' growing skills has illustrated some areas where the school could improve further. For example, staff have identified that whilst boys and pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress, they do not always attain as highly as other pupils. As a result, the school has provided more opportunities for pupils to benefit from teaching which is particularly focused on their next steps. For example, a major strand of the school's recent work has been to develop an approach to learning sounds and letters for all pupils from Reception to the end of Year 2. This involves teachers and support staff working with small groups of pupils from different classes on a regular basis and closely monitoring the gains they make in their knowledge of sounds. A new way to develop writing has also been introduced which has been greeted with enthusiasm by pupils and their teachers. Although it is early days for these initiatives, the school has noted a pleasing increase in the attainment of different groups. This has included an increase in the percentage of pupils working at higher levels by the end of Year 2, particularly in reading.

This inclusive school pays very good attention to the care and support of pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It provides particularly well for pupils with more complex disabilities, ensuring their full participation in learning and school life. It involves their families well and, as a result, such pupils make good progress and wholeheartedly enjoy their time at the school. The strong focus on speaking and listening across the curriculum supports the progress of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties well and the school is rightly developing additional expertise in this area to help such pupils further. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, improving both the presentation of pupils' written work and making much better use of information and communication

technology to help pupils learn. This track record of effective action to continually improve the quality of education means that the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with a wide range of skills and experiences but generally these are below those expected for children of their age. For a significant minority this is their first experience of an English speaking educational environment. As a result, their communication, language and literacy skills in English are well below those expected. The range of exciting indoor and outdoor activities in the Nursery provide a very good stimulus to talk and so help all children develop their speaking and listening skills well. In addition, skilful adults work on more focused activities which successfully support children's language development.

Staff pay particular attention to developing children's personal and social skills. For example, boys and girls in the Nursery class build friendships, feel secure and thrive in their 'colour' groups. Similarly, in the Reception classes, children learn to organise their own outdoor and indoor learning during certain sessions in the day. They do this independently and demonstrate a great deal of maturity in collaborating well with others and in their attention to their self-chosen tasks. The school has correctly identified that the outdoor area for Reception children does not yet offer the same quality of experience across all learning areas as the indoor activities. This is one reason the Foundation Stage environment is being remodelled over the coming weeks. A second area that the school has earmarked for action is to extend the successful phonics programme to children in the Nursery class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to benefit from teaching which is closely targeted to their next steps.

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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?	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 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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	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

17 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Newtown Infant School and Nursery, Chesham, HP5 3AT

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting you. You told me how much you like your school and your parents said the same thing. They told me how happy they are that all the adults care for you and help you to learn well. These are some of the reasons that Newtown is a good school.

The adults at the school do a good job. They make your lessons fun and help you with things you find hard. They care a lot about you all and try to make sure you are happy. They also think about how they can make things even better for you, like improving the outdoor area for the children in the Reception classes. They listen to your ideas about this too.

Your teachers have been really pleased with how hard you have been working in your Funky Phonics groups. They can see how nearly all of you have met your targets and moved up in your groups. I have asked them to think about how they can help you meet your 'next steps' in other lessons too.

Thank you again for a lovely day.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector