

Gilbert Heathcote Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112662
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	310969
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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	122
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gordon Simmons
Headteacher	Ms Sue Armenante
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Whittington Moor Scarsdale Road Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 8NF
Telephone number	01246 450634
Fax number	01246 456222

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether all pupils achieve as well as they can, particularly in reading, whether teachers use assessments effectively, the impact of academic guidance on achievement and standards and the impact of leadership and management since the last inspection. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff and governor representatives. In addition, there was observation of parts of several lessons, scrutiny of school information and its self-evaluation statement, analysis of samples of pupils' work, evaluation of parents' questionnaires, and discussions with pupils. 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 a smaller than average sized school serving the mixed community of Newbold Moor near Chesterfield and drawing over half of its pupils from outside the catchment area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or a disability, including those with a statement of special educational need, is similar to that in most schools. The school commenced Federation with a local junior school in September 2007 and the headteacher is now the headteacher of both Federated schools. The school has achieved Investor in People Award, Eco Green Flag Award, Bronze Anti-Bullying Commitment Award and an Active Mark for sports.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Children enter this small school with levels of knowledge and understanding which are often below those expected for their age, particularly their language and communication skills and their social and emotional development. They make good progress from their various starting points and often attain above average standards by the time they leave the school. In mathematics, they are often well above. Arrangements to ensure children are appropriately supported and progress well in the Foundation Stage are also good.

The school's success arises from the clear vision and direction given by the headteacher to a caring and committed staff. Everyone works as a team, in partnership with governors and parents, to achieve their shared vision of 'a stimulating, caring environment where all are valued and have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.' The positive ethos and family atmosphere are evident on entering the school. The school environment is nurturing yet challenging, so children become well-rounded individuals. As a result, children not only achieve well academically but some of their personal achievements are exceptional. It is not surprising that parents are highly appreciative of the school. One wrote 'our child was immediately welcomed into a warm and friendly environment by all staff and children...She is extremely well cared for and feels safe and loved.' This comment represents the views of many who responded to the questionnaire. Children echo this sentiment in their demonstration of exceptional levels of enjoyment. One volunteered 'I love, love love it!'

Children's personal development, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is good. This represents remarkable progress from the low starting point of many. Behaviour of the majority is good and, for an increasing number, it is exemplary. Adults ensure that the behaviour of the very few who find it hard to maintain the high expectations held of them without adult support does not interfere with the learning and enjoyment of others. Additional support offered, such as work within the Sunshine Room and Restorative Practice, helps a great deal in this regard. Children are encouraged to express their opinions and to accept responsibilities, allowing them to grow in confidence. They take pride in helping others and in looking after each other, their school and the environment beyond. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe. The combination of good literacy, numeracy, and personal skills equips children well for the next stage of education and life. Providing good care and guidance is central to the school's ethos and includes systems for ensuring high levels of health, safety and welfare of children alongside safeguarding procedures that comply with requirements. Children say they feel safe and are confident that there is always someone to help them with any problems. Adults go the extra mile to make sure that everyone is included in everything that the school has to offer. They do all they can to convince the very few who do not attend regularly of how important it is to be at school every day.

Teaching is good and is able to inspire children because of the enthusiastically delivered and mostly carefully planned lessons containing lots of practical, hands-on activities to engage and challenge them. Relationships are extremely positive, resulting in children being keen to work hard. Those who find learning more difficult get good support, both individually and in groups from able teaching assistants, so these children achieve well. Recent initiatives, including 'fun phonics', to speed children's progress in reading and writing are beginning to pay dividends though not all staff share the same high levels of professional knowledge and confidence in

delivering these programmes. Systems to provide academic guidance are much improved and based on regular and rigorous checks of assessments and group learning targets that help children to improve. School leaders acknowledge that though children do well in all subjects, the guidance given to individuals does not always help them to do as well in reading and writing as it does in mathematics, particularly in achieving the highest level.

The good curriculum has focused well on ensuring the development of children's important basic skills. A carefully thought out programme of personal, social and health education successfully helps to encourage children's remarkable progress with their personal skills. Children enjoy a range of activities in lunchtime and after-school clubs that go beyond the required subjects. A new and creative approach to delivering the curriculum has been established which involves subjects being taught through topic themes that bring learning alive and make it memorable for children, and they have many opportunities to practise their basic skills in other subjects. For example, a topic about growing vegetables involved not only science but also environmental, health education, art and literacy.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Expectations are high and challenging targets are set and met. Governors offer a good degree of support and challenge to school leaders and are looking forward to adding even more rigour to their involvement in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Leaders have ensured not only that issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed but also that the school has continued to go from strength to strength, demonstrating a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly because of the good support and knowledge of staff, which make children feel secure and ready to learn and because of the excellent relationships formed with children and their parents and carers. In Nursery and the Reception class, exciting activities and topic themes are carefully planned based on good knowledge of children's needs. These are taught well by teachers and teaching assistants, ensuring that children make good progress from low starting points. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities which offer children opportunities to practise what they are learning in different ways. Consequently, when they enter Year 1, most have achieved the levels of knowledge and skills expected. School leaders recognise that the existing outdoor facilities are an inhibiting factor in ensuring that the quality of the curriculum offered, matches the high quality of that which they enjoy indoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards attained in reading and writing to match those of mathematics by ensuring consistently high quality teaching and learning and academic guidance in these subjects which challenges all children to do as well as they can.
- Ensure the quality of the outdoor curriculum offered to children in the Foundation Stage matches that which they enjoy indoors.

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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?	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	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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

5 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Gilbert Heathcote Nursery and Infant School, Chesterfield, S41 8NF.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

There are many good things about your school. Some of them are that:

- you achieve high standards and make good progress
- Most of you behave well and work hard to help others
- your knowledge of how to keep yourself healthy is outstanding and of how to keep yourself safe is good
- you enjoy school a great deal and the school is good at organising interesting things for you to do
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are well cared for and looked after
- your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are highly effective at making sure that you get a good education.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. However, all of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them with this the most important things to do next are:

- make sure that the teaching of reading and writing skills, for example in 'fun phonics' is always as good as it can be and that your targets are as helpful as they can be so that you all do as well in these subjects as you do in mathematics
- further improve the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage so that your learning here can be as good as it is indoors.

I certainly enjoyed talking with you and finding out all about your school. I particularly enjoyed hearing you sing so nicely in assembly and seeing your lively and active 'Get Up and Go' session at the start of the day. Keep on working hard, doing your very best, coming to school every school day and enjoying your time at school.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector