

Northern Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116030
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312153
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs Gay Shelley
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Richmond Rise Portchester Fareham PO16 8DG
Telephone number	02392 370693
Fax number	02392 214245

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Northern Infant School is smaller than most schools that cater for primary aged pupils. Most who attend are White British. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties is well above average. However, currently no pupils have a statement of special educational need. There have been two recent staff appointments. One teacher has been newly appointed to the leadership team and another, who is a newly qualified teacher, is on a temporary contract covering maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Northern Infant School is a caring and nurturing environment. It builds self-esteem and self-belief and encourages the children to do their best', says one parent. This statement represents the views of most parents and they are right in their judgement that this is a good school. The school's achievements have been recognised by others. In recent months, the school has received the Active Mark and their Investors in People status (IIP) has been reconfirmed.

Pupils receive a good quality curriculum and good teaching from the moment they start school. They achieve well in all year groups and by the end of Year 2 attain standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although this represents good progress for most pupils, some more able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. One of the reasons for this is that they are not always challenged to do their best in lessons. The staff are working hard to change this by introducing new strategies, for example, to teach phonics. This is making a difference and pupils and staff say that they enjoy the new work. Pupils who have learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems also achieve well. They benefit from a range of good intervention strategies that include one to one sessions and the excellent nurture group work that takes place every day. This exemplifies the good quality of care and guidance that the school provides for pupils and this is something that parents particularly appreciate.

Pupils' personal development is good. They work hard and try their best to behave well. They learn to work together and to respect one another. Pupils really enjoy their time at school but their attendance has declined and the punctuality of some pupils is not as good as it should be. Although school works very well with external agencies to support pupils in their development and to encourage positive attendance, more could be done routinely to encourage better attendance. The leadership and management of the school are good. There is a strong focus on community and on extended services to enhance provision. Leaders, managers and governors are clear about the strengths of the school and where more improvement is needed. However much has been achieved since the last inspection and the school has made good progress. It is this progress and the strength of the staff team, governance and parental support that demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's induction into the Foundation Stage is of a very good quality. As a result of the very good partnerships with parents and pre-school providers, children soon settle into school life; they are happy and feel safe and secure. Even though a significant proportion of the children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age, children make good progress. This is because the curriculum is planned to provide a good balance of opportunities for child initiated learning and teacher directed activities. The Foundation Stage staff operate well as a team. They are well led and managed and committed to school improvement. The staff are enthusiastic and form very good relationships with the children they teach. They provide very good role models for the children's personal development. It is no wonder that children have fun in the Foundation Stage and achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils who are more able are challenged to do their best in all lessons so that standards continue to improve in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve procedures to promote good attendance and implement them effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils move into Year 1, the majority have attained standards that are below expectations for their age. During their time in Years 1 and 2, they build well on the good progress made in the Foundation Stage. This picture of good achievement was reflected in the 2007 national assessments for pupils in Year 2. The assessments showed that standards were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics and that pupils with learning difficulties achieved well. Attainment at the higher levels, however, was not as good as the school had hoped for. This was most notable in writing; however, outcomes at the highest level in reading and mathematics were also below national expectations. The school's work to improve pupils' achievement is beginning to make a difference. However, the achievement of more able pupils remains an issue; this is because their good achievement is not assured throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities in school and are proud to be a 'buddy' or a member of the new school council. Pupils work together well and talk positively about working with partners or as part of a group. Pupils enjoy school a good deal. Even so, pupils' attendance has declined and is now below the national average; the punctuality of some pupils is also not as good as it should be. The vast majority of pupils behave very well in school. However, a minority sometimes find it difficult to behave positively in class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to respect each other and the different beliefs and cultures that people have. Pupils know they need to keep safe; they understood the need to wear goggles when making their wire sculptures during the inspection. Pupils also know that it is important to keep healthy by being active and eating well. Pupils enjoy being involved in community events and in supporting charities. Last year, pupils in Year 2 organised their own fair to raise money for their chosen charity. Such activities along with the good guidance provided for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills, prepares them well for the next stage in their school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff form very good relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to develop in self-confidence and motivates them to try their best. The school's 'learning adventure' is a key priority for all staff and pupils respond well. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning which they say is fun. Teaching assistants are deployed very well by all teachers and they make a highly effective contribution to lessons. Very good partnerships with parents also contribute well through the school's approach to 'home learning'. Recent changes to the teaching and learning of phonics have been well received by staff, pupils and parents. As a result, improvement is

being seen in the progress pupils make in reading and writing. A particular feature of this approach is small group work and planning of activities that are closely matched to pupils' needs. In most other lessons, planning reflects the needs of learners well; however, there remains some inconsistency in the challenge provided for more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well thought through. A curriculum map identifies subject coverage on a two-yearly cycle and careful planning of project work ensures that all pupils receive their appropriate entitlement. The curriculum promotes pupils' independence, their collaboration and creativity and this contributes well to their personal development. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Particular features include one to one sessions with a member of staff at the beginning of the day and the excellent sessions for the 'Seals' group that also take place. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of extra curricular activities that include music and sport. In addition, educational visits and visitors to school enhance the curriculum and pupils' learning effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff show a high level of commitment to care for all pupils. Parents value their dedication and comment on it positively. Effective strategies are in place to promote pupils' health and safety and their good behaviour. Arrangements for safeguarding are similarly rigorous. Although school works very well with external agencies to encourage attendance, procedures to promote good attendance are not as robust as they should be. Very effective partnerships with others are fundamental to the effective guidance provided for pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils are becoming more confident to assess their own progress in lessons and at the end of projects. The traffic light system provides opportunities for parents to comment on their children's progress once completed by the pupils and their teachers. Pupils' academic progress is tracked carefully and intervention is well planned. Placing pupils in the nurture sessions for specialised support is a very good example of where the provision is particularly successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Northern Infant School benefits from the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Central to the headteacher's vision is the strength of inclusion and care for all its pupils. To this end, the school focuses on the improvement of staff expertise by the sharing of good practice and well-planned continuous professional development. Their success is evident in the good progress made since the last inspection in the raising of standards. Leaders, managers and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, in its current format the school improvement plan, which is an interim plan, does not clearly show the school's work to improve the achievement of more able pupils. Governance is effective. Governors work well to be supportive and to hold the school to account as a critical friend. The school now provides good value for money.

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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	2
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	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

26 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Northern Infant School, Fareham, PO16 8DG

I visited your school recently. Thank you for making me so welcome. I very much enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you like about your school. I was soon able to find out lots of things:

- your school is a good school
- from the moment you start in Reception you have lots of fun things to do
- your teachers work hard to make their lessons good
- you enjoy your lessons and in particular you like the new phonic groups
- the work you do in the SEALs group is excellent
- you try hard and make good progress in your reading, writing and mathematics
- all the people who work with you at school care about you a great deal
- the staff work very well indeed with your parents and other people to help you
- your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors do a good job to lead your school.

There are some things that I think could be better and your headteacher and teachers are going to:

- make sure that those of you who can manage work that is a bit harder have just the right work for you to do in lessons
- encourage you even more to make sure that you attend school regularly.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley

Her Majesty's Inspector