

Central Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117156
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312520
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs N Joof
Headteacher	Mr M Tatters
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Derby Road Watford Hertfordshire WD17 2LX
Telephone number	01923225129
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Central Primary School is smaller than average. Provision includes a nursery and two speech and language centres and the school has significantly more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. An above average proportion of pupils have statements of special educational need. More pupils than average come from areas of social and economic disadvantage. About two thirds of the pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and almost half do not have English as their first language. Many pupils join the school after the normal entry time. Attainment on entry to the nursery is low. There have been several changes in leadership and staffing over the last three years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Central Primary is a good school where the needs and aspirations of all pupils are at the heart of its work. The speech and language units are effective in helping pupils to improve their skills. Flexible systems to support new pupils, many with English as an additional language, enable them to access the curriculum rapidly. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that help is there if they need it, a tribute to the school's exemplary pastoral care and support. Pupils with statements of special educational need, with learning difficulties or medical requirements have their diverse needs catered for well.

Standards by Year 6, although below the national average, are appropriate for this diverse community. The school's records show that, given their starting points, pupils of all abilities achieve well. Many children have poor communication skills when they join the nursery and many join other year groups having little or no English. However, although these pupils do not attain the levels expected nationally, they achieve their personal targets. Several pupils are on track to attain the higher levels.

All teachers plan carefully to cater for the diverse needs of their pupils. Good relationships and the good additional adult support contribute to pupils' successes. Pupils' eagerness to learn is evident in the lessons and they respond well to their teachers' advice. Although pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance in the form of targets to help them improve their basic skills, few know what they need to do to attain the next level. This is because most teachers' marking evaluates how well pupils have done but does not advise them about their next steps therefore pupils are unable to take responsibility for their learning by responding to personal challenges.

The curriculum is well planned, enabling pupils to practise their skills across subjects. The good range of additional activities enables pupils to follow their interests, but there are too few opportunities for them to extend their learning through educational visits or visitors to school. This prevents pupils from learning from first hand experience and limits opportunities for them to broaden their horizons. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and take their responsibilities within school seriously. There are some opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community, such as the choir performances for the senior citizens. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of citizenship through planned community projects.

The headteacher and senior management team have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and monitoring to ensure teachers respond to the outcomes have had a significant impact on the school's success. Staff are united in their desire to do the best for the pupils in their care and the programme of professional development ensures they have the skills to do so. This provides good potential for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start, settling into their routines quickly, because of good leadership and good teaching. Strong teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants, therapists and the counsellor ensures that pupils in the early stages of learning English, and those with speech and language difficulties, make good progress. Good planning includes varied and interesting learning activities, carefully matched to individual

needs. Children enjoy learning and make good progress. The strong emphasis on speaking, listening and social skills prepares them well for the future. Children in the speech and language unit make equally good progress because of the specialist programmes that support their needs effectively. The supportive and caring relationships and good role models provided by staff effectively promote their personal social and emotional development. Children feel safe and secure. They enjoy using the outdoor play area, which promotes their learning well. Staff gain a good knowledge of children's attainment when they come into the school and this is used effectively to set targets. Although children make at least satisfactory progress, many have not reached the expected goals for their age by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers marking and the advice they give shows pupils exactly how to improve their work.
- Provide more opportunities for educational visits and visitors to school to help pupils broaden their horizons and learn through practical experiences.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of citizenship by providing more opportunities for them to contribute to the wider community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, fewer than average attain the expected levels by Year 1. Pupils continue to achieve well throughout the school. By the end of Year 2, although standards in reading, writing and mathematics were below average overall, more pupils than average attained the higher levels in the 2007 national assessments. In the same year, almost half the pupils in Year 6 were not in the school in Year 2. Several had joined Years 4 and 5 speaking little or no English. This resulted in low standards in English, although standards in mathematics and science were higher. The school sets challenging targets, and pupils' records of progress show that most are on track to achieve or exceed them. More pupils in Year 6 are working at higher levels in English, mathematics and science this year. Nevertheless, there are a significant number of pupils who, in spite of making good progress, may not acquire the expected levels in English by the time they leave school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They acquire a good understanding of the many cultural traditions in our diverse society, through, for example, considering the work of Dizzy Gillespie in a music lesson on modern jazz. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong, good self-esteem and work well together. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. They feel secure and safe and say that on the rare occasions when bullying or racist incidents occur, these are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils help one another and play amicably together at break times. A parent praises 'the lovely, friendly and family orientated atmosphere'. Older pupils show good initiative in befriending newcomers and helping younger ones. The school council has produced a mural in the dining room to promote healthy eating, helping pupils make healthy choices. Pupils know the importance of taking exercise. Some contribute satisfactorily to the community through, for example, their

involvement in fund-raising for good causes. However, pupils rarely initiate or contribute to community projects outside school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The consistently good teaching throughout the school is the main reason why pupils achieve well. Teachers and pupils respect each other. Pupils behave well and work hard and, because teachers and support staff value their strengths and help them overcome their difficulties, pupils are eager to learn. All adults question pupils in ways that make them think. Teachers ensure they speak clearly, using amplification when necessary, to support pupils' diverse needs. They make good use of the school's tracking systems to adapt work to meet pupils' needs. Support staff are given good guidance and liaise closely with the teachers and each other. Work is marked carefully and is evaluative so that pupils know how well they have done. Some teachers suggest ways pupils could make their work better. Pupils have group or class targets and teachers ensure there is time for them to work towards them. However, because few pupils know their next steps in learning, individuals are unable to set themselves personal goals in order to accelerate their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepares pupils well for their future lives. Relevant curriculum planning and good quality support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English are well catered for. The very popular Learning Library provides parents with outstanding opportunities to take home literacy and numeracy games and a wide range of high quality bi-lingual books to support their children's enjoyment and achievement. There is a good range of after school and lunchtime clubs. However, although the curriculum is good, there are too few opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences through educational visits or visitors to school. The good personal, social and health education curriculum permeates throughout the school, through for example, circle time, assemblies, counselling and the effective work of learning mentors and support assistants on raising pupils' self-esteem. The new booster classes to accelerate the learning of identified pupils are beginning to impact positively on achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive outstanding pastoral care. Staff know their pupils extremely well and warm relationships ensure that pupils can confidently turn to an adult when they need to. The school ensures that pupils are safe, through its effective procedures for child protection, health and safety and vetting of staff and visitors. Good systems for monitoring attendance have resulted in substantial improvements in recent years. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is monitored and reviewed regularly and assessment information is used effectively to plan focused support for those who need it. However, advice to individual pupils does not yet give them a clear understanding of how to improve. Good partnerships with specialist teachers, support assistants and speech and language therapists ensure that pupils with speech and

language difficulties receive good support and make good progress. They are integrated thoughtfully into mainstream classes, receive good support and make good progress. Equally good support for those for whom English is not their home language, such as the Welcome Groups and the provision of bi-lingual support has a positive impact on their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since the headteacher was appointed he has generated a stable work force following a period where there had been a reliance on overseas and supply teachers. Local authority support has been used wisely. A good professional development programme, linking to performance management and school development, has enabled leaders and managers at all levels to hone their skills. The headteacher recognises and makes good use of the talents in school. For example, the newly appointed subject leader for English, who rapidly developed good systems for raising pupils' achievement, soon joined the senior management team. All staff have clearly defined responsibilities and know exactly what is expected of them. The school makes good use of resources, including the community centre and is swift to take every opportunity to raise funds to support pupils' learning. It is short-listed for a grant to improve the outdoor environment. Finances are managed prudently and the governors fulfil their duties conscientiously. They support the headteacher and staff well, but, as several governors are inexperienced, they rarely question or challenge leadership decisions.

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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	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	2
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	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	1
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	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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Central Primary School, Watford WD17 2LX

Thank you very much for all the support and help you gave us during our visit to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all. We were very pleased to hear from you how well you behave, how much you enjoy school and how hard you work. We could see these things ourselves as we visited your classes.

We agree that your school takes very good care of you and makes sure that everyone gets the help he or she needs. You have good teachers who help you to make good progress. Your teachers are very good at helping new pupils to settle in quickly and to learn English. If you learn quickly, you have plenty of challenge to keep you busy.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that you know what you need to do to achieve the next level in your learning. This will help you to set your own targets and please your teachers with your progress. We know you learn lots of interesting things in school. We would like teachers to make learning even more interesting by arranging for you to make more visits outside school. We have asked them to invite more visitors to school to help you enjoy your lessons even more. We know you support charities but we feel many of you would like the opportunity to do more to help improve things outside school.

Mr Tatters is a good headteacher and your school is well led and managed. He and other teachers have worked hard to make sure you have all you need to help you achieve well. One of the important things they have done is to make sure teachers know exactly what you have learnt and whether you are learning as well as you could be. This has helped them plan work that is just what you need.

You and your teachers make your school a very happy place where everyone is important and cared for. You are part of a good school. Well done. Keep up the good work.

Best wishes

Mrs Judith Dawson

Lead inspector