

Cuffley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117565
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312655
Inspection date	30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	410
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Collett
Headteacher	Mr John Fowler
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Theobalds Road Cuffley Potters Bar Hertfordshire EN6 4HN
Telephone number	01707 888100
Fax number	01707 888101

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection looked at the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in detail. The inspectors also evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues:

- How well do the pupils achieve, especially through KS2 and what has the school done to help girls make better progress?
- How well does the curriculum including enrichment and extension activities have an impact on outcomes?
- How effective is the current EYFS provision given the recent changes to staffing?

Evidence was gathered from a range of local and national data, the information that the school has on tracking pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation form and school improvement plan, and lesson observations. Discussions were held with the headteacher and staff, a member of the governing body and pupils. Parents' questionnaires were analysed and the school's systems for safeguarding pupils were checked. Other aspects were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate within the report.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves the village of Cuffley and surrounding area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils who have learning and/or physical difficulties is below average although an above average number has statements of special need. The main needs concern speech and language difficulties, physical difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The large majority of the school population are White British. There are a small number of pupils from a wide range of different ethnic heritages. The school has gained Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is organised through the Nursery and Reception classes. There is a wide range of attainment on entry but most children join the school with knowledge and skills above those typical of the age group.

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 and improving school that is providing pupils with an often innovative education. It has some outstanding features. The school delivers an outstanding level of care, guidance and support, and this is ensuring pupils' excellent personal development. This can be seen in the strong relationships and very positive attitudes pupils have towards school. The school's strengths are the result of the outstanding leadership shown by the headteacher. This ensures a lack of complacency and a willingness to look outside the school for fresh ideas. The headteacher has taken a positive lead in a wide range of initiatives, particularly focused on improving pupils' learning skills and preparation for their future education. Some of this work is yet to have a measurable impact on the standards achieved, as the teaching is not yet consistently strong throughout the school. The school is rightly very popular with parents. One summed up many parents' views when they wrote, 'Cuffley is a wonderful school which we feel privileged to belong to.'

The standards achieved by pupils in the national tests are consistently above average. This reflects the good progress they make in many subjects. In particular, a well above average proportion of the pupils reach the higher levels in reading, mathematics and science. Reading standards are particularly good and this reflects the pupils' evident love of books and their response to the well-organised and well-used libraries in school. The school recognised that, in contrast to the national picture, boys were making better progress than girls and achieving higher standards. A good deal of effort was put in to ascertain why this was happening and because of this successful efforts were made to ensure the teaching took more account of the girls' needs. This has addressed any underachievement that existed. Those pupils with learning difficulties or physical disabilities are fully included in the life of the school through the excellent work of the learning support assistants. Because of this, they make good progress as do pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school takes part in a number of initiatives that have helped it promote the achievement and experiences of the most able pupils, as well as those with specific gifts and talents.

The picture in writing is more complicated. Children often start school with experience and knowledge of writing that is well below their other skills. Recent improvements to the curriculum particularly focusing on creativity and the use of a wide range of stimuli to inspire writing have resulted in some very high quality imaginative work, as for example, in the use of drama and role-play to explore the theme of the witches in Macbeth. However, many pupils are not yet able to demonstrate these skills in the national tests sufficiently, and their normally high standards are not fully reflected in their scores. One example of this provided by the school shows that they often want more time to write than the test provides. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and music are well above those expected.

The school provides an outstanding and innovative curriculum. The curriculum offers very effective support for teachers in their planning but its most recent focus has been on teaching the pupils how to become effective learners. This has been done through introducing a wide range of learning styles based on known and tested methods of encouraging creative thinking and of developing skills that will support the pupils as lifelong learners. This work has a very high profile and pupils are well aware of how it can help them. For example, in one lesson Year 2 pupils were encouraged to reason and reflect, while considering Jack in the Beanstalk's emotional journey during his adventure. However, this new approach has not yet been successfully embedded in all teachers' practice across the school. Excellent links are made

between subjects to enable pupils to use their skills for a purpose. In one excellent example, literacy and ICT skills were used to great effect to produce a documentary film telling the story of Boudicca as part of their history project for the school's own internal television channel. The much-improved use of ICT across the curriculum is an example of the school's outstanding improvement since the last inspection.

The teaching is good overall, with some that is inspirational and makes full use of the creative aspects of the curriculum. Where the teaching is weaker, questions are not always targeted appropriately or used sufficiently to assess pupils' understanding. As a result pupils' attentiveness and concentration slip as the pace of the lesson slows. Pupils' behaviour is good. They confirm that bullying is very rare and they have complete confidence in staff to sort out any problems. In the best lessons tasks are challenging and active, providing pupils with real problems to solve, many opportunities to develop their thinking skills, and excellent opportunities for them to work collaboratively. The school has developed detailed tracking systems to identify any pupils who may be underachieving, need extra support or who may be very able, gifted or talented. This information is discussed and up-dated regularly and helps staff be more aware of the success of the teaching. Targets set by teachers are appropriate and sufficiently challenging. Pupils are also encouraged to help set targets for their own improvement and this is proving an excellent way of helping them to be very clear about what they need to do to be successful.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. The school has robust systems for ensuring pupils are safe and secure and these are reflected in their excellent understanding of safety issues. These extend to the wide range of enrichment and out-of-school activities such as sailing. Pupils are mature and articulate speakers and they make an outstanding contribution to the community as a direct result of the school's excellent work on ensuring community cohesion. Pupils are happy to take responsibilities in school. They enjoy working with local organisations such as a home for elderly people and the church. They also develop an excellent understanding of the needs of others much further afield and have raised sufficient money to build a school in Africa. The school has excellent partnerships with a wide range of organisations to spread good practice and to support their continual search for improvement. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet requirements.

Although the school has a significant number of important aspects that are outstanding, some of the initiatives have yet to have a full impact on standards. Because of this, leadership and management are good overall, although the school's self-evaluation is outstanding and has led to the identification of very appropriate priorities for improvement. The work of subject leaders has had a good impact on achievement but this has been inconsistent as practice in monitoring performance varies from subject to subject. The governing body is supportive of the school and aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors obtain a good range of information about how well the school is doing, partly through regularly termly visits to the school. The outstanding improvement made since the last inspection, especially in ICT, and the willingness of the headteacher and staff to try new ideas from a wide variety of professional development activities, reflected clearly in the innovative curriculum and rising standards, shows that the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into the welcoming environment of the nursery and reception classes. This is because of the thoughtful and effective routines that start the sessions. Staff greet the

children warmly and have tasks ready for them to tackle that encourage them to be independent and take responsibility for their learning. Consequently, they feel secure, respected, confident and make good progress. Good opportunities for children to move between nursery and reception rooms at appropriate times extend their experience. A good balance between teacher-led and meaningful child-initiated activities is evident. For example, children picnicked outside on rugs with their teddy bears and played in Goldilocks' cottage using the mathematical language they had been practising earlier with the teacher. They sorted bears into groups and answered teachers' challenging questions about 'how many would you have if I gave you 4 more?' Staff are very good at finding opportunities to develop the children's knowledge of being safe and healthy. Children are enthusiastic and responsive to their work, giggling delightedly when anything unexpected happens such as Goldilocks breaking baby bear's chair. Their attitudes are good and they are able to concentrate and persevere, and cooperate by helping one another. This is because children's welfare is watched over extremely carefully by staff. In some areas, such as their personal development and independence, their progress is excellent. The majority are on target to reach the standards expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1 and many are on track to do better.

Interesting activities, covering all the areas of learning, are planned throughout the entire EYFS, which contribute to the effective teaching and very good support from teaching support assistants. Children's progress is well tracked and assessed. The accommodation is not ideal but used well with good plans to develop and improve further. The EYFS is well led and managed although the leader has only recently taken on the role.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue helping pupils develop their writing skills and improve their ability to demonstrate these skills in a set period of time.
- Improve the quality of the teaching by developing teachers' questioning skills and by ensuring greater consistency in their support for pupils' thinking skills.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Cuffley School, Cuffley, Hertfordshire, EN6 4HN

I would like to thank you for the way you made me welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to some of you and sharing in your work and play. I especially liked some of your art and design work, including the modelling material work you did in each class.

Some of the things I really like about your school are:

- Mr Fowler's excellent leadership;
- the way staff encourage your excellent attitudes towards school;
- the way staff help you develop your skills in working together and learning in different ways;
- the good standards you reach in your work;
- the way the school ensures you are well looked after, safe and cared for in school, and
- the way the staff provide such a wide range of interesting and exciting things for you to do every day.

Even the best schools can do some things better. I have asked Mr Fowler and the teachers to:

- help you improve your skills by writing pieces of work in a set period of time
- make better use of questioning to assess how well you are learning, and ensure the new ideas about learning styles are used consistently well by everybody.

Many thanks again for your help. Enjoy your time at Cuffley and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector