

Grove House Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120804
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313745
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Tracey Bowman
Headteacher	Mrs Annie Catlin
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Gilpin's Ride Dereham Norfolk NR19 1BJ
Telephone number	01362694379
Fax number	01362853769

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a market town not far from Norwich. The majority of pupils are White British. However, a significant minority, about 12%, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Portuguese. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties. These are mainly moderate learning difficulties such as literacy. Some pupils have speech and language needs and a very small number have severe learning difficulties. Though pupils begin school with a wide range of attainment, their overall attainment on entry to the Nursery is significantly lower than might be expected. The school has suffered considerable staffing upheavals over the last couple of years. These are now settling down. However, there is an acting headteacher in post whilst the substantive headteacher temporarily provides cover for a class in order to ensure stability of frontline provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children get a good start in the Nursery where they progress well and learn to do things by themselves. Though there has been some underachievement in the past, due to the staffing situation, especially amongst older pupils. However, progress in the rest of the school is now satisfactory. Standards remain below average at the end of Year 2, but the gap between the school's performance and results nationally is narrowing. Standards in writing are best and close to national averages. Pupils who require additional help are now being identified earlier and their needs better met as a result. Overall, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next step in education and future life.

Maintaining a reasonable standard of teaching has been a high priority during the period of staffing uncertainties. Currently, teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Planning is effective and teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. However, pace of work in lessons is slow at times and tasks are not always tailored sufficiently well to pupils' learning needs or to maximise progress. Good relationships and behaviour management ensure that most pupils cooperate with adults and behave well in lessons. Whilst there are instances of bad behaviour, these are usually dealt with effectively when brought to the notice of staff.

A satisfactory curriculum supports teaching and learning and promotes pupils' personal qualities. Pupils develop sound knowledge about healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Overall, their personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most enjoy school. Attendance, though still a little below average, is improving as a result of the school's efforts. Pupils tend to be somewhat dependent on adults to help them with work. This is partly because, other than in the Nursery, opportunities for them to develop initiative and to work effectively on their own are not extensive enough.

Pupils are looked after well and generally feel safe. They are confident about talking to an adult if worried or concerned. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' personal development and especially to their spiritual, moral and social awareness. Pupils are becoming better at listening to others. They are confident about initiating conversations and easily share their views. They are less skilled at explaining their thinking or working out how to solve a problem by themselves. Pupils are beginning to reflect on their work and think about how to make it better. However, they receive limited guidance, through written feedback or individual learning targets on what they need to do to improve.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school has built sound capacity for future improvement by developing a strong senior team which includes both the substantive and acting headteachers. The chair of governors works closely with this team. Together, through accurate self-evaluation, they are identifying and addressing key areas for improvement in order to raise standards further. Weaknesses in pupils' reading skills, for example, are being tackled through improving the teaching of letter sounds for younger pupils and guided reading for older ones.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in the Nursery. Nevertheless, standards remain below average by the end of Foundation Stage, especially in personal and social development, literacy and numeracy. Teaching is satisfactory. Learning objectives are

clear and good use is made of children working in pairs and with computers to promote learning. However, pace is slow at times and activities are not always structured well enough to get the most out of children. Nonetheless, children enjoy learning and develop confidence as learners, especially in the Nursery. The stimulating learning environment and interesting range of practical activities found in Nursery are less evident in Reception. Inconsistencies in assessment mean that staff are not always as well informed about children's progress and, hence, how to improve it. Sound leadership is tackling these inconsistencies.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils work at a good pace in lessons and that tasks are well matched to their needs in order to improve progress and standards.
- Develop the use of learning targets and improve written feedback to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop pupils' skills and confidence in explaining their ideas and solving problems on their own so that they become more independent as learners.
- Improve the consistency of provision across the Foundation Stage to improve the progress children make.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Results of assessments at the end of Year 2 tend to be below average, especially in reading and mathematics, though pupils make satisfactory progress in these areas. There has been some improvement in these over the last three years and results are getting closer to national averages. This is reflected in the work of pupils currently in Year 2. Work is best in writing, where standards are close to average and progress is often good. Able pupils and those with additional needs make similar progress to others. Portuguese pupils, most of whom have little English when they join the school, learn to speak it quickly and it is hard to distinguish them from those whose first language is English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are happy at school. They enjoy the range of activities it has to offer, particularly practical subjects, visits and visitors. Pupils' enjoyment of physical education and sports contributes to their health and well-being. In lessons, pupils wait patiently for help when stuck but often lack the skills or initiative to help themselves.

Behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory and many pupils behave well. However, a few pupils voice concerns about some who behave badly. Pupils get on reasonably well with others including those who are from different backgrounds. Inspired by two teachers learning Portuguese, many pupils are keen to do so too and to learn more about Portuguese culture. However, their overall knowledge of other cultures is relatively weak. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. In assemblies, they reflect sensibly on wider social and moral issues. The growing range of opportunities to take responsibility, such as recent participation in the

recruitment of a new teacher, is helping pupils to make an increasingly valuable contribution to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is improving as the school resolves its staffing difficulties. Planning is thorough and detailed so that learning outcomes are clearly defined. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to help pupils understand the work in hand. Good questioning in most lessons enables staff to check and extend pupils' understanding. Working in pairs helps pupils to clarify ideas with one another. However, pace of lessons is sometimes slow, especially when pupils working on tasks have to wait for the next instruction or for help on what to do next. Work is also not as closely matched as it could be to pupils' learning needs, leading to slower progress at times. One-to-one support for pupils with severe learning difficulties is effective in enabling them to participate in lessons. Whilst books are regularly marked, pupils are not given enough feedback on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactorily tailored to the needs and interests of pupils. Greater emphasis on using visual and film materials is helping to accelerate pupils' progress in reading. A new computer suite gives pupils better access to information and communication technology, but its use to support learning in other subjects has yet to be fully developed. Improved provision for those with learning difficulties means they are beginning to make better progress. Support for pupils who have English as an additional language is sound. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all areas of learning largely through practical activities that children enjoy. The outdoor area is not yet used extensively enough but this is being addressed. A good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors enriches the curriculum making it more interesting for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good pastoral support contributes to a sense of community which enables pupils to feel happy and safe. Appropriate systems ensure pupils' health and safety. All the proper checks are made on adults working in the school and child protection procedures are secure. Good links with external agencies, including education welfare officers, ensure that the needs of all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable, are met. Though many parents are very supportive of the school, some express concerns particularly about staffing difficulties and how well their views are heard. At the heart of most concerns is the need for improved communication with parents.

The school is improving assessment and its use to support pupils' learning. Teachers refer well to learning objectives to help pupils understand how well they are doing. However, the use of individual targets to help pupils and their parents identify more precisely their next steps in learning is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Strong teamwork and enthusiasm for school improvement amongst staff are positive indicators that the school is successfully tackling issues produced by a prolonged period of staffing instability. Though the staffing issues have yet to be fully resolved, there is greater stability than in the recent past. A robust set of systems and procedures are being put in place to guide the work of the school. Individual staff are confident about their roles and those with responsibilities provide sound leadership. A well-developed improvement plan is helping to prioritise their work effectively. The acting headteacher, in partnership with the substantive headteacher, other senior staff and the chair of governors, is providing good support for improvement and helping to maintain a positive, upbeat atmosphere. The school is successfully drawing on strong links with other schools and the local authority to help it to improve and shield it against any further staffing difficulties. Governors provide sound oversight of the school's work.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grove House Nursery and Infant School, Gilpin's Ride, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1BJ

I enjoyed visiting your school, and talking to you as well as watching you work. I would like to thank you for making me feel welcome. Your school gives you a satisfactory education and prepares you satisfactorily for your next school.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school and your attendance is improving.
- Children in Nursery get a good start to their education.
- During your time at school, you often make good progress in writing.
- You are well looked after and feel safe at school.
- Teachers manage behaviour well in lessons and ask good questions to help you learn.
- Staff work well together to keep on improving the school and making it better.

There are a few things that need to be improved.

- Make sure that you are given work that is the right level of difficulty and that you work quickly enough.
- Teachers should give you individual targets in literacy and numeracy and guidance to help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work.
- Help you to become more confident about working on your own.
- Make sure that the children throughout the Foundation Stage receive an equally good quality education.

You can certainly help by asking staff about what you can do to make your work better and by continuing to listen more carefully in lessons and to others. It was very nice to meet you and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead inspector