

John T Rice Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122452
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314298
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Isabella Vint
Headteacher	Miss Maureen Tunney
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2004
School address	Braemar Road Forest Town Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG19 0LL
Telephone number	01623465588
Fax number	01623465460

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This slightly smaller than average infant school serves the area in and around the Newlands Estate, Forest Town, a former mining area near Mansfield, which is part of a local regeneration project. In 2005, a Children's Centre was built adjacent to the school to help support local families. Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of early experiences, with some having attended the Children's Centre or other local groups. Nevertheless, on entry to the Foundation Stage, skills are below, and sometimes well below, the expectations for this age. The large majority of children are of White British heritage and a few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion currently eligible for free school meals is above average although the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below that often seen. The school holds an Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. At this time of year, children particularly enjoy being at school and sharing Christmas activities with their families and others in the local community. Parents are mostly pleased with what is provided for their children and as one notes, 'The teachers are committed and enthusiastic and I have great respect for them and the school.....'

When they enter the Foundation Stage, most children want to learn. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, but when they enter Year 1, standards are still often below expectations. In assessments at the end of Year 2, attainment in several recent years has been close to national averages, but in 2007, standards fell considerably because fewer children achieved above the average levels. Tracking information shows this was at least in part because there was a larger proportion of children with learning difficulties than in other groups. Nevertheless, taking this into account, the school recognised that not all groups of children were achieving all they could. In the last year, there have been many changes to planning and the way the school checks and tracks the progress made. In Years 1 and 2 children now make satisfactory progress and standards are set to rise in reading, writing and mathematics.

The personal development of the children is good. Most are happy and enjoy the range of activities available. The majority behave well, although a small number of parents have concerns about behaviour. Most children know they have to play sensibly to ensure that everyone is safe. They understand that eating healthily makes them fit and they enjoy physical activity.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff manage children effectively ensuring that they make progress in all areas of their learning. The planning of activities to meet the needs of groups of different abilities is satisfactory although at times more could be expected of them. The curriculum is satisfactory. Staff have taken notice of a recent inspection of mathematics in the school. They have reduced the number of worksheets and provided more opportunities for children to record their own ideas. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The pastoral care of children is good because staff know and care for the children well. While the checks and tracking of progress have been improved, some aspects need to be embedded further to ensure all information is used well enough to set challenging activities.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school has long established practices and routines but the tracking of progress has not been as effective as it could be. The English and mathematics subject leaders have a good grasp of their new roles and have been instrumental in leading recent improvements. School self-evaluation is accurate. Staff and governors recognise both the strengths and areas for improvement, including the growing use of assessment data. There is satisfactory capacity to improve further and this is good in some key areas while still at an earlier stage in others.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

On entry to the school, many children have limited skills in speaking, early reading and writing and in their personal and social development. Most settle well and are keen to do what their family and friends can do. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory, as is the curriculum. The range of activities includes adult directed tasks and opportunities for children to make choices in their learning. Because children are keen to live up to the

expectations of staff, they make at least satisfactory progress and those of all abilities achieve satisfactorily. However, while there are good elements to teaching, occasionally staff do not demand enough of children. When they enter Year 1, their skills are still below those expected, particularly in the area of communication, language and literacy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by consistently challenging children of all abilities.
- Make sure that the information available from recently improved systems to check and track the progress made is used to inform planning.
- Ensure that the monitoring of the work of the school is rigorously evaluative in order to identify further areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In recent years, standards at the age of seven have usually been similar to those seen nationally and children have done well in their writing. However, standards dipped in reading in 2006 and there was a considerable fall in 2007, especially in reading and mathematics. This was because, while a reasonable proportion of children attained the lower levels in assessments, fewer reached above the average level. The school had been aware from assessments that standards in 2007 were set to dip. Nevertheless, the average and higher achieving children, and particularly the girls, did not make the progress anticipated and not all reached their individual targets. To address this several changes have been made. These include more support activities for the lower achieving and other targeted groups to ensure they make consistent progress. Children of all abilities now achieve at least satisfactorily and tracking information indicates standards are set to rise to around national averages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children enjoy coming to school, most get on well together and their behaviour is good overall. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and children are given clear messages about working together and helping others. Children develop a good sense of the school and local community. They understand how to stay safe and most play together well, although at times they can be a bit unfriendly towards each other. Most know that if anyone says nasty things to them, or is unkind, they can tell the staff and this is usually resolved. However, a small number of parents have concerns about bullying. The school addresses this issue well and with consideration for the community as a whole. Children particularly enjoy physical activities and understand how this, coupled with sensible food choices, helps them stay healthy. Attendance is satisfactory but affected by holidays in term time, which does not always support learning or help children prepare for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff have good relationships with the children, which ensures that lessons are conducted in a productive manner, harnessing the children's natural enthusiasm. Because activities interest the children, most try hard and make progress in their learning. Support staff play an effective

role in working with children both within lessons and in withdrawal groups. This helps teachers focus on the needs of others. The planning of lessons is satisfactory, with linked activities for those of different abilities. However, at times staff do not expect enough of children, either through the level of challenge or in the presentation of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers plan a satisfactory range of activities that reflect the children's interests. There is a sound focus on the development of key areas of literacy and numeracy, although at times staff miss the opportunities to focus on how speaking and listening skills will be developed across the curriculum. There is a greater emphasis in mathematics on practical tasks and children recording their ideas in their own words. Visits to places of educational interest and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum satisfactorily. Resources are appropriate and the rolling programme of school refurbishment ensures the learning environment is pleasant and stimulating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know and care for the children well, quickly recognising if they are unhappy or need additional help. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, helping them to grow in confidence and develop their skills. The school works well with a range of external agencies to support children and their families. There are good systems to reward the children's efforts and attendance. The checks on those who help in school are satisfactory, as are procedures for child protection and health and safety. However, the monitoring of these areas is not as rigorous as it should be to ensure that the recording of activities and day-to-day procedures is fully effective. Recently, staff recognised that the ways in which progress was checked and tracked was not as thorough as it could be. Many changes have subsequently been made, including the use of information and communication technology to manage the data. However, these procedures are an early stage and information could still be used more effectively to challenge all groups of children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The long-serving headteacher and staff work well together as a team. Staff, including classroom assistants, are valued for the work they do. The deputy headteacher is playing a crucial role in taking a lead in assessment procedures. There have been shrewd appointments of staff, enabling key roles in English and mathematics subject leadership to develop well. Senior staff have opportunities to monitor planning and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Such opportunities, however, are not extensive and some of this work is not rigorously evaluative and is therefore of limited help in identifying areas for further improvement. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are keen to develop their role further, for example through more focused visits to extend their first-hand knowledge of provision.

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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?	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	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

14 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of John T Rice Infant and Nursery School, Forest Town, Mansfield, NG19 0LL

Thank you very much for looking after me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you in lessons, when we had our Christmas lunch and when I chatted with the school council. I think the school provides a satisfactory quality of education for you.

These are some of the best things about your school:

- Staff care for you well so you feel safe and know there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.
- Most of you like coming to school, behave well and say you particularly like playtimes.
- There is good support for those of you who find learning hard.
- The staff who help organise what happens in literacy and numeracy are keen to help you do even better in your work.

This is what that I think could be improved:

- Teachers could plan activities that are a bit harder for you.
- Staff could use the information from your work to make sure they know what else you need to do.
- Teachers, and sometimes the governors, could check what happens in school more to see what else could be improved.

To help your school, please try to make sure you attend regularly and get on well with everyone all the time. I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector