

Colebrook Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126252
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315458
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Lake

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Marriott
Headteacher	Frances Billinge
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Towcester Road Stratton St Margaret Swindon SN3 4AS
Telephone number	01793 823057
Fax number	01793 820341

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average junior school serving a local community in the outskirts of Swindon. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and few pupils have English as an additional language. None of these are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry is improving year on year and is currently above average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The current headteacher has been in post for 18 months and a significant proportion of teachers have joined the school within the last two years.

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 satisfactory and improving school with many good features. It provides a warm and welcoming environment appreciated by parents and pupils. As one parent said, 'The staff are friendly and helpful; my children have thrived and grown in confidence.' In a relatively short time, the dynamic leadership of the headteacher has welded all staff into a strong and effective team with a shared vision about how to make the school even better. They work closely with the good governing body that supports the school and manages the budget well to allow improvements to take place. Through good leadership and management, the school has rigorous and effective systems for checking on itself and accurately identifying strengths and areas for development. This has enabled significant improvements to take place and standards to rise, although it is too early to see the full effect of all the initiatives.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the time they leave school at age 11, they attain standards that are above average overall but with some variation between subjects. A thorough assessment of pupils' performance identified that there had been significant underachievement for several years. Through well targeted interventions and with the support of the local authority, the decline identified was halted and progress is improving rapidly. This is most evident in English where standards are now above average and achievement is good. The school has started to apply the same strategies to mathematics. Nevertheless, despite the good progress pupils are now making, the current Year 6 has too much ground to make up in mathematics where standards are average. The school has correctly identified that if standards and achievement in all subjects are to improve further, a greater proportion of more able pupils need to attain higher standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive well targeted support that enables them to make good progress. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now above average.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development is good because of the provision in the good curriculum. Although pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, their understanding of the rich diversity of cultures found in Britain is not good enough. Attendance is excellent. Pupils really enjoy school because teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. The satisfactory teaching is improving rapidly because of the professional development in place. For example, the rapid improvement in the quality of pupils' writing followed targeted professional development. Pupils and staff are particularly pleased with the impact of the new behaviour policy that has reduced unsatisfactory behaviour through establishing a consistent and effective approach that all understand. Parents feel behaviour is now good. Inspectors agree and feel pupils are keen to learn, which is contributing to the improvements in standards and achievement. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through such activities as the school forum and, in doing so, gain additional skills that contribute to their good preparation for economic well-being.

The good care, support and guidance that pupils receive ensure that they know how to stay safe and healthy. Good quality assessment procedures check on how well pupils are doing and identify ways of providing support. Nevertheless, this information is not always used effectively enough to plan lessons that challenge the most able to achieve the best they can. Pupils with LDD receive good support from the capable teaching assistants and through the good links with support agencies.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics to match those in English.
- Ensure more able pupils are challenged to achieve their very best.
- Provide better opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the rich diversity of cultures to be found in Britain.

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

Pupils make satisfactory progress compared to their attainment at age 7 and attain above average standards in English and science. Recent assessments show that progress is improving across the school and in many cases is now good. However, it is too early for the full impact of this to be seen in the achievement of the current Year 6. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory with most making steady progress towards their challenging targets. Improvement in English, especially writing, is particularly impressive. The focus last year on raising standards in English resulted in a dramatic improvement in achievement that is now good. Nevertheless, although a great many pupils attain the expected Level 4 in national assessments at age 11, the proportion attaining the higher Level 5 is average. A similar more recent focus on strategies to improve achievement in mathematics is already having an impact. Standards in mathematics have risen from significantly below average to average, but are not as good as those in English and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support that enables them to make good progress towards their targets. At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT were below average. In the last two years, a continual and relentless focus on improving ICT has enabled standards to rise to above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are characterised by friendly relationships throughout the school. Pupils form good relationships with their classmates, working and playing well together in pairs and groups. Older pupils are proud of being 'buddies' and 'helping hands' to others. The school forum members take their responsibilities seriously. Together with their good ICT skills, these activities enhance pupils' preparation for future economic well-being. Pupils feel safe in school, stating that bullying is rare and adults look after them well. They understand how to stay safe in many circumstances, including when using the internet. Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy. They are keen participants in sports and enjoy healthy lunches and fruit snacks. Attendance is excellent and reflects pupils' great enjoyment of school. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good but their understanding of cultural diversity is not good enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers organise their classes well and create a pleasant working environment, based on the very good relationships they have with their pupils. This enables pupils to develop their self-confidence and good attitudes to their work. Teachers mark pupils' work clearly and make many encouraging comments, but marking does not always show pupils clearly enough how they can improve their work. The quality of teaching is improving, with many good lessons because teachers are making better use of information on pupils to plan lessons that meet better the widely varying needs of most pupils. However, more able pupils are not challenged consistently. Their progress is sometimes no better than satisfactory because not enough is expected from them, particularly in writing and mathematics. ICT is used well to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with a good range of learning opportunities, including French. The good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education helps them understand how to stay safe and healthy, and prepares them well for their future lives. Pupils and parents welcome the wide range of activities after school hours. The emphasis on physical activities and the links with the school sport co-ordinator programme ensure that the pupils get plenty of exercise, which they enjoy. The dynamic and attractive learning environment values pupils' work and stimulates them to learn. Trips to places of interest and the residential visits, which pupils in Year 4 and 6 look forward to, further enhance the curriculum. Visitors to the school broaden the pupils' views of community, although too few opportunities are provided to give pupils an overview of cultural diversity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to build a strong inclusive community where pupils' interests are paramount. As a result, pupils develop trusting relationships with all adults in the school. Pupils spoken to appreciate the guidance that they can get from adults, as one said, 'When you have a problem it's like talking to a friend.' Parents rightly expressed pleasure at the level of care and guidance that the school offers. Procedures for safeguarding and caring for pupils are clear, thorough and effective. The provision of regular assessment opportunities and the close tracking of pupils' progress are rapidly improving aspects of the school's work. Targets set for their learning are understood by pupils. Most pupils receive good guidance, although more able pupils need more detailed guidance on how to make better progress in their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and the school works well with a range of outside agencies to support them. The systems to support pupils who are gifted or talented are relatively undeveloped and have yet to show a significant impact on achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The many improvements taking place in the school are a direct result of the effective leadership and management. Governors and staff appreciate the management style of the headteacher. The changes to a more shared method of leadership have proved effective. As one subject leader said, 'I feel empowered now to do my job properly.' All subject leaders feel that they are part of a team that works closely with the headteacher and governors to identify ways in which the school can improve. Individual subject action plans are of good quality and link directly to the overall school improvement plan. The budget is managed well to support initiatives to improve achievement and standards. The school's self-evaluation is of good quality. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning enables the senior management team to have a detailed and accurate view of how well pupils are learning. This enables challenging targets to be set. The headteacher recognises that minor refinements to the way the much improved assessment information is presented would enable a better overview of whole school performance. Given the rapid improvements taking place, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	1
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?	3
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	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	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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colebrook Junior School, Swindon SN3 4AS

Thank you for talking with us when we visited your school. You gave us a lot of helpful information.

We think that yours is a satisfactory school that is getting better quite quickly. We can see why you enjoy school a lot and we were very impressed by your excellent attendance. These are some of the other things that we liked about your school.

- By the time you leave at age 11, your standards are above average in English, science and information and communication technology.
- Although you are making satisfactory progress throughout your time at the school, this is getting better quite quickly; in English, you are making good progress.
- Your standards have improved a lot recently especially in writing and mathematics although your standards in mathematics are average.
- You behave well and show respect for adults and one another; we agree with you that behaviour has improved a lot.
- The school gives you many interesting things to do that help you learn.
- The school looks after you well and you all told us that you feel safe and secure.
- The headteacher, helped by other staff, leads and manages the school well.

I have asked the school to do just a few things to help make it even better.

- To help you improve your mathematics so that you achieve as well as you do in English by age 11.
- To use the information teachers have on what you already know to plan lessons that challenge those of you who are more able to do your very best; you can help by telling teachers when the work is too easy.
- To find ways of helping you find out more about different cultures in Britain.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake Lead inspector