

Avenue Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131002
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	315696
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Weston HMI

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	500
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathy Brown
Headteacher	Stephanie Tate
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Avenue Road Extension Leicester LE2 3EJ
Telephone number	0116 2708326
Fax number	0116 2708326

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large, recently amalgamated school serves the Clarendon Park and Stoneygate areas of Leicester. Most pupils who attend the school live locally, although some travel from further afield. Around half are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with over a quarter in the early stages of learning English. This is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. There are few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times. Pupils enter school with a wide range of ability, but standards overall are at the expected levels. The school was re-awarded Investor in People status in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to establish this newly amalgamated school, blending together and building on the strengths of the two former institutions. However, weaknesses carried over into this newly created school have a severe impact on its work. There has been some improvement, but despite school leaders' best efforts to address them, this has been insufficient. The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate. This does not reflect the school's view of itself, which is a little more generous.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and most meet the expected goals for their ages by Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average. However, this masks the variability in teaching and pupils' achievements throughout the school. Whilst there is good teaching which helps pupils to progress well, there is too much inadequate or barely satisfactory teaching where progress stalls. This is most evident in writing, mathematics and science and is due to a number of reasons. Some teachers do not always ensure that activities are matched carefully enough to the pupils' different abilities and there is not always a high level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most able. Pupils are not always clear how to improve their work because targets are not shared with them and marking does not give clear guidance on how to improve. Although pupils are encouraged to talk and develop their ideas, sometimes they have to spend too much time listening to adults, which reduces the time they have to apply new learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. A far greater focus is now given to assessing and tracking pupils' progress and this is beginning to help target support where it is most needed. Some pupils are starting to make better progress. However, progress remains inconsistent because the information is not being used sufficiently well by all teachers to plan work for pupils.

Pupils' personal development, the curriculum, and the care, guidance and support they receive are all satisfactory with some notable strengths. Pupils generally behave well and particularly enjoy the good range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs that are on offer. These also make a sound contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyles, their awareness of keeping safe and their involvement with the local community. Cultural development is also strong. Pupils and the majority of parents speak well of the school; they feel it is a place where children are safe and secure, and where any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive and reassuring manner.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leadership team are fully aware that much still needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve what they are capable of, and that teachers and governors must play a more rigorous role in evaluating how well pupils and the school are achieving and performing. The recent improvements show that the school has the necessary capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children coming into the Foundation Stage classes have a secure start to school. Most children make satisfactory progress in their learning and in their social and emotional skills. By the time they start in Year 1, most achieve the goals set for children of this age in most areas of learning. Teachers give pupils an appropriate range of learning experiences. However, sometimes children are left too long to work on their own without adult guidance. Participation in a national project enables children to gain a secure grounding in early reading skills. Children enjoy their time at school and are developing independence and maturity. They are articulate and able to speak clearly in a variety of situations. For example, in the role-play café, children ordered their meals in French. They share, take turns and understand the importance of taking care of each other. They feel safe and secure and know that adults will help them. The manager has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision and has identified appropriate actions for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of pupils throughout the school in writing, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring work challenges pupils of all abilities, especially the higher attaining pupils.
- Use assessment information consistently to plan appropriate work for pupils.
- Extend the role that teachers and governors play in monitoring the work and performance of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement overall, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in the early stages of learning English, is inadequate. This is because the quality of teaching is too inconsistent throughout the school. Data and scrutiny of work indicate that progress through the school is uneven, with significant numbers of pupils making insufficient progress depending on which class they are in. Children enter and leave the Foundation Stage with broadly average skills for their age. In the 2007 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, pupils attained average standards in reading and writing. They were below average in mathematics. In 2007, pupils in Year 6 reached broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. However, achievements in mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2 were well below expectations. End of Key Stage 2 targets were not met in any subject and analysis of data indicates that they are unlikely to be achieved for the next two years. The school has identified where performance is weakest in each year group, and is starting to address this. However, weaknesses in pupils' ability to write at length, their understanding of mathematical calculation and measures, and investigation skills in science slow the progress they make.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school is a harmonious community with pupils from different countries and ethnic backgrounds working and playing well together. Pupils are lively, but move around the school safely and with due regard for each other. They are very open and friendly, and relationships between pupils are good. Some parents are concerned about bullying but pupils are very clear

that they feel safe in school, and the good relationships between pupils suggest that this is certainly the case.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory, with cultural development a strength. The choir is particularly successful, with far more pupils participating than are usually found in primary schools. In lessons where pupils are given interesting things to do they work well. However, in some lessons, where the teacher talks too much, pupils become disengaged. Pupils undertake many roles in school, including as school council members. The school councillors have a sense of responsibility towards their peers but are not clear about their role. Pupils know what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle but in practice, they do not always do this. This was summed up well by a Year 6 girl who, when asked about the apple she was eating, ruefully admitted that she had had a jam sandwich for lunch, although as she said, 'It was on brown bread!' Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with other schools. Pupils are developing the basic skills and the personal qualities that will stand them in good stead in their future lives; a good example is the way in which they are learning to work with each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Although there is some good teaching, too much is inadequate or barely satisfactory. As a result, significant numbers of pupils do not make the expected progress. Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information to plan work that is well matched to the learning needs of pupils. In addition, teachers' understanding of the curriculum is limited and does not enable them to provide challenging activities for pupils, especially those who are more able. Teaching methods do not always engage all pupils and sometimes pupils spend too much time listening passively to the teacher. This reduces the time pupils have to practise and use their skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. Questioning skills are not used well to check how pupils are doing in their lessons. In some classes, teachers do not always emphasise the importance of presentation in pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the needs of most pupils and all statutory requirements. There is adequate provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The school is involved in a national pilot, which is having a positive impact on the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1. Staff are in the early stages of implementing revised national guidance for English and mathematics and are developing a more creative approach to curriculum planning through the introduction of philosophy for pupils. However, this is not fully embedded throughout the school. Provision for music and art is especially good. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of visitors to school, such as a puppeteer who provided a show which focused on eliminating bullying. Pupils also take part in visits to local places of interest like the Botanical Gardens. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities to meet the needs of pupils after school. These enriching activities make a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Many displays of pupils' work in classrooms and shared areas are of good quality.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for, and appropriate safeguards for their well-being are in place. The school uses a number of ways to assess and monitor pupils' progress, and the information from this is used to target specific groups of pupils and give them additional support with their learning. However, there is no coherent system for sharing targets with individual pupils, which means that pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve their work. Marking varies, with some good marking which moves learning on, but practice is inconsistent, with too many examples of ineffective marking. The school has taken some positive steps to improve behaviour and personal development, such as the Positive People club. Outside agencies are used appropriately to support pupils' personal development, for example, the behavioural support team. There are good systems in place that ensure that the relatively high numbers of pupils who arrive from other countries are integrated quickly and successfully into the school community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to merge two very different schools. The appointment of the present headteacher has coincided with the school moving at a much faster pace in addressing weaknesses that emerged following the amalgamation. The headteacher and senior leadership team have assessed the school's weaknesses and put in place strategies that have seen some improvements in provision, teaching, assessment and curriculum planning. However, working on such a broad front has led to actions not always being fully and consistently implemented across the school and the impact has not always been checked. The school's self-evaluation is frank but, whilst generally accurate, a little generous at times. That said, the headteacher is realistic and recognises that there is still much work to be done in ensuring that the quality of teaching improves and that all pupils in school make good progress. Key to this will be the rigorous and more incisive role played by teachers and governors in monitoring the work and performance of the school. This is satisfactory at present because the last 15 months has seen their roles develop appropriately. However, this is work in progress and needs to maintain a cutting edge.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Avenue Primary School, Leicester, LE2 3EJ

You may remember that we recently visited your school and this letter is to tell you about what we found out. Before I do that, I would like to thank all of you for making us so welcome and being so polite and helpful. We had the chance to talk to many of you and it was really pleasing to hear about how much you enjoy school, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you have any problems. We have asked Mrs Tate, the teachers and governors to make some urgent improvements to the school. Someone will visit the school in the next six to eight months to check how well the school is doing.

We found that the school offers a good range of after-school clubs and visits out of school that you really enjoy. The school works hard at making sure that you are cared for and looked after, and helps you to keep fit and healthy. A strength of the school though is you, the children!

Your good behaviour and enjoyment of school shone through. Mrs Tate leads the school well and together with all the staff and governors she is very keen to make the school a better place for you to learn. We have spoken to Mrs Tate and staff about what is needed to make your school a more exciting place to be.

There are times when not all children in school do as well as they could. So we have asked the school to make sure that teaching always helps you to make good progress, especially in writing, mathematics and science. We have also asked staff to check carefully and regularly how well you are doing and for teachers and governors to make sure that the progress you make is good enough.

Mrs Tate, the staff and the governors want the school to continue to improve. Having met you, I am sure you will want to play your part as well. I wish you every success in your futures.

It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston Her Majesty's Inspector

29 November 2007



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