

Cosby Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119919
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	320674
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melvyn Booley
Headteacher	Tracy Withers
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2007
School address	Portland Street Cosby Leicester LE9 1TE
Telephone number	0116 2863103
Fax number	0116 2863429

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a fairly prosperous village a few miles to the south west of Leicester. It has suffered a sharp decline in numbers on roll in recent years and is now of broadly average size. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational need have both risen steadily in the last three years and are broadly average.

When the school was last inspected it was made subject to special measures. Monitoring visits have been made each term since then to determine the progress the school is making.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures. Its effectiveness is now satisfactory. Leaders and managers at all levels have worked tirelessly to improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. The school now has a very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Staff carefully track pupils' progress and use this information to strengthen teaching and the curriculum where necessary. As a consequence, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress to reach standards that are broadly average when they leave, which represents a marked improvement since the last inspection. There is still some remaining underachievement for a very small minority of pupils in Year 6, especially in mathematics, where pupils' ability to use their number skills in solving problems is a weakness. Children in the Reception class make good progress, largely because of consistently good teaching and an outstanding indoor learning environment.

Teaching overall is satisfactory. Staff have warm and positive relationships with their pupils. They stimulate pupils' enjoyment by making generally good use of a range of methods and resources. Younger pupils, for example, talk of the great enjoyment they get from reading: they speak highly of their good library facilities and of a memorable day spent with a visiting author. However, the pace and challenge of learning varies considerably between classes. While in some classes pupils engage quickly in activities and are encouraged to learn independently and in teams, in a minority of others pupils spend far too long 'on the mat' listening to teachers talk and losing concentration. There are similar inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback to pupils. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of new systems for assessing pupils' work to let pupils know how they have done, and to help pupils assess their own work against clear success criteria. However, teachers' comments are not always clear on how pupils can improve their work further, especially in relation to the targets pupils have for raising their attainment.

The school is particularly good at promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. An engaging curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors, and by opportunities for pupils to take part in many clubs and activities beyond the classroom. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their excellent attendance and good levels of participation in the wide range of activities the school offers. Pupils make a very positive contribution to school life through their positive attitudes and good behaviour. Care, guidance and support for pupils are sound and pupils feel very safe. They also have a strong awareness of how to live healthily. Their very good understanding of the impact of good health on the body is testament to both the good quality of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the improved science curriculum. That the school has moved forward so quickly in these areas, and that it has been successful raising pupils' achievement, is a clear demonstration of a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Reception class with standards below those typical for their age. Standards are well below expectations in writing, reading and creative development, but as expected in their personal and social development and their number skills. Good progress is made in all areas of learning and children leave the Foundation Stage with broadly average standards.

Teachers carefully assess and monitor children's progress. Good teaching and learning and a well-planned curriculum ensure that children sometimes have direction from adults and sometimes discover for themselves, and that each activity helps children move forward in their learning. Learning is certainly fun! Within a nurturing and highly stimulating environment, children are encouraged to learn independently. However, this independence is constrained at present because of restrictions on accessing outdoor learning facilities. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There are strong links with parents who are highly supportive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' use of number in solving problems.
- Ensure a consistently high pace of learning through sharper introductions to lessons and by encouraging pupils to work more independently.
- Sharpen the quality of marking and feedback on pupils' work, to ensure that pupils are always clear about the next steps they need to take in raising their attainment.

A small proportion of the 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

Children, having joined the school with skills below those typical of their age, achieve well in the Foundation Stage to reach broadly average standards when they start Year 1. Elsewhere in the school, achievement is satisfactory for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards are broadly average overall in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Progress is often good for pupils in Years 1 to 3. Older pupils are still catching up work missed in the past but are now making satisfactory progress overall.

Pupils' progress in reading is satisfactory and improving. Their progress in writing is improving too although the accuracy of spelling and punctuation, together with the quality of presentation of work, are relative weaknesses. Progress in mathematics is slower than in English because there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of number to solve mathematical problems. It is also slower because pupils have more work to catch up than in other subjects, and a small minority in Year 6 are still not reaching the standards they should. Pupils make most progress in science because of the many exciting opportunities for them to undertake scientific investigations and experiments. Progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. Pupils use the computers competently, for example to research information on the Internet and to present their findings using a variety of different software packages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school a good deal. They feel safe and secure because they are confident that staff will quickly sort out any problems they have, and because pupils themselves have a good regard for each other's safety and well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They behave well, and reflect on the needs of others in the wider community through a lively programme of assemblies and through their active participation in charitable fund raising activities. The school council has helped to initiate a number of key

improvements to the school's environment, and pupils show an eager willingness to contribute to projects such as the redevelopment of the pond area. When working on such projects, and when given the opportunity in class, pupils show good teamworking and leadership skills. The general skills they develop for later life, however, are satisfactory rather than good, in reflection of their satisfactory progress and average standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to live healthily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good teaching in the Reception class enables children to make a very good start to their school life. The quality of teaching across Years 1 to 6 is less consistent and is satisfactory overall. Good and occasionally excellent learning occurs when teachers' introductions to lessons are crisp, when pupils are clear about the purpose of their activities, and when activities are well designed to allow pupils to move forward independently. However, in a minority of lessons the pace of learning is slow because the teacher talks for too long. Pupils lose focus on the purpose of their work as they remain in the carpet area too long and consequently have little time to learn independently.

Teachers throughout the school promote good relationships and manage behaviour well. They generally use a good range of resources in and out of the classroom to stimulate pupils' enjoyment of learning. Work is mostly well adapted to provide suitable challenge for pupils of all abilities, with challenge for higher attainers much improved since the last inspection. While teaching assistants often make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, their work and deployment in lessons is not always planned coherently with the teacher to achieve the best effects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Sports, music and art feature strongly. A good extra-curricular programme offers a wide range of clubs that are well attended. A broad programme of trips and visits stimulates pupils' interest in learning and in their understanding of the wider world. The PSHE programme is well planned to develop pupils' awareness of matters important to their health and well-being.

Following a major review after the last inspection, the curriculum is now responding to the needs of all pupils within the school. The recent review of the science curriculum has led to more practical work and the enjoyment of an investigative approach. The school has successfully addressed the underachievement of boys, developing their interest in reading and writing through themes and activities of more appeal to them. Good opportunities are given to higher attaining pupils to develop their skills through work on special projects, such as the development of the school grounds and the organisation of a coffee morning in aid of Macmillan nurses. There are strong links with the local high school to further the provision for the gifted and talented. The school now provides sound opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills through work in other subjects. However, such links are still developing, and some opportunities are missed to help pupils apply their ICT and number skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

As classes are relatively small, adults know each child well and use this knowledge effectively to provide good individual care and support. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sensitive support so they make similar progress to their peers. The school works well with other schools and external agencies to promote pupils' education and welfare. For example, close links with local high schools ensure pupils make a smooth transfer to the next stage of their education. Child protection and health and safety arrangements are sound and regularly reviewed.

The quality of academic guidance is variable. The school now tracks pupils' progress carefully, enabling underachievement to be swiftly recognised and support put in place where necessary. Marking is regular and it highlights mistakes clearly. However, marking and other guidance does not consistently provide pupils with a detailed enough understanding of their targets, progress and the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has successfully maintained the morale of the school community while focusing rigorously on raising standards. The school has worked closely with its local authority to make judicious use of a wide range of advice and support which has rapidly turned around the school's performance. The school's capacity for further improvement has developed strongly, because leaders and managers at all levels now make good use of available information to diagnose problems and implement solutions. Staff, for example, effectively analyse pupils' progress against their targets to show where provision is more or less successful. However, targets for whole-school performance have been set at a level which is unrealistically high in places. Sound governance has supported school improvement. There is a growing capacity within the governing body to hold the school to account for its performance. This is presently driven by a small group of governors who have developed effective ways of finding out about the school's provision. Governors recognise the need to develop broader strategic planning to secure the school's future in the light of falling rolls and consequently tight budgets.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	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?	2
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?	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	3
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	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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cosby Primary school, Cosby, LE9 1TE

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. As you know, I have visited the school in each of the last three terms, and each time I have noted how friendly and helpful you are. This helps everyone feel safe and secure. Your willingness to get involved in projects to help others, such as in charitable fund raising or developing the school grounds, also gives you important teamworking skills which will stay with you in later life. That you enjoy your education is clear from the moment you come to school in the morning, and the school gives you plenty of interesting activities to make your learning fun. It is good to see so many of you getting involved in healthy activities.

The school is giving you a satisfactory quality of education. It is helping you to make satisfactory progress to reach standards similar to those found in most schools by the time you leave in Year 6. This is an important improvement since the school was last inspected just over a year ago. The improvement has been brought about by the good leadership of the headteacher and other leaders in the school, and the hard work of other staff to make necessary changes. As a result, the school's leaders no longer need the special help they were given after the last inspection.

My report identifies a number of ways in which the school can continue to get better. It makes three main suggestions. First, although standards in mathematics have improved, you need to be able to use your number skills better when solving problems. You can help here by practising your mathematics whenever you have the chance, so that you get more confident in using numbers in lots of situations. Second, we have asked teachers to make sure that you get on with your learning quickly in class, and do not spend too long listening to instructions on the mat. Third, we have asked teachers to let you know through their marking how you can improve your work, and especially what you need to do to reach your targets.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson Lead inspector

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Ian Hodgkinson
Lead inspector