

Newcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119950
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	322300
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Phil Goulding
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
School address	Trueway Drive Shepshed Loughborough LE12 9DU
Telephone number	01509 503214
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Age group	4–10
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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

When the school was inspected in January 2007, it was judged to require special measures because standards were below average and pupils' progress was inadequate. Weaknesses were also identified in assessing and tracking pupils' progress, curriculum balance, and in senior leaders' monitoring of standards and teaching. HMI inspected the school in June and November 2007, and again in February 2008 to assess the school's progress in addressing these issues. At the last monitoring inspection the school was making good progress in tackling the weaknesses listed above. The school is slightly larger than average. Pupils transfer to the local high school at the end of Year 5. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Newcroft is a good school. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It has made very good progress since being made subject to special measures. Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is good. Staff have created a well organised and creative environment in the Foundation Stage in which children thrive and achieve well. The good start the younger children make continues through to the Reception Year because of the effective provision and stimulating teaching. Children attain average standards. At the end of Year 2, standards have risen to be average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. By the end of Year 5, standards are slightly above national expectations in English, but not matched in mathematics where standards are slightly lower reflecting the legacy of underachievement in this subject. Senior leaders recognise that standards in mathematics need to be raised further and have well judged strategies in place, but the impact of these is not yet fully evident. From their starting points, pupils make good progress overall. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective provision which takes account of their specific needs.

Teaching is good overall and a particular strength is the quality of relationships between pupils and teachers. Because teachers know pupils well they are able to plan for their different needs effectively. Just occasionally, there is some inconsistency in setting challenging tasks to extend pupils' learning fully. Teachers have worked hard to promote pupils' understanding of targets in English and mathematics. The marking of pupils' work and discussions with them about how well they are progressing towards the targets is mostly secure. Pupils benefit from detailed comments that often show how they have improved their work. However, there is some inconsistency so that pupils' response to teachers' advice is not always followed through fully. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is successful in helping pupils to understand their emotions and appreciate the importance of respecting each other, themselves, and the adults who work with them. Pupils attend regularly and their enjoyment of school and learning is good because the curriculum meets their needs well, supported by extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum well. Pupils are well looked after and feel safe and secure. Senior leaders, ably led by the headteacher, check and evaluate the school's performance well. They have proven themselves to be effective in dealing with key areas of weakness as well as continuing to build further on the school's strengths. Significant improvements in the way the school collects, analyses and uses assessment information and tracks pupils' progress have successfully improved the school's effectiveness. Staff and governors have valued the local authority's good balance of support and challenge. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are increasingly thinking strategically and have worked closely with senior leaders in identifying the right priorities for further improvement. In the light of improvements already secured, capacity for improvement is good and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the school with knowledge and skills that are below those expected, especially in relation to their language skills. Children settle happily into school, and the adults provide them with a good balance of teacher led activities

and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. The children behave well, and readily share with others. A good range of resources is provided, and, although the school has no dedicated outdoor area, the available resources are used well. The staff work hard to create a friendly and caring learning environment, and the children enjoy school and develop good social skills. Good teaching reflects the good progress made by children so that they attain average standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Speed up the process to raise standards in mathematics so that they match those attained in English.
- Eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in marking and in providing greater challenge for all pupils in all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make a flying start in the Foundation Stage. As a result, by the end of the Reception Year, most attain the expected levels. In Year 1, pupils reach average standards although their performance in reading is better than in writing and mathematics. In Year 2, pupils' progress is good because of effective teaching and this enables pupils to attain average standards in reading and writing. Standards are above average in mathematics. In Years 3 and 4, the inadequacies in teaching and learning noted in the previous inspection report are no longer evident. Overall, pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. However, pupils' achievement in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is not as secure as it is in reading and writing. Pupils make good progress in Year 5 so that overall standards are broadly average. This represents good achievement for pupils from their starting point. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support, and this enables them to make good progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is evident in good overall behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils relate well with their peers and adults in the school. The school's recent focus on promoting pupils' thinking skills is helping pupils to express their views and feelings well. Bullying is rare; if it occurs, pupils feel it is dealt with promptly and fairly. Adults listen to pupils and they feel safe, as a result. Pupils enjoy their lessons and most attend school regularly. They make healthy choices when eating in school and keenly participate in a range of physical activities. Pupils contribute to decision making within the school through the school council. They make a considerable contribution to the wider community through taking part in local events and raising funds for worthwhile causes. The good progress pupils make in developing their basic skills and their increasing competence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are preparing them well for their next school and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know their pupils well and want them to do their best. They provide interesting lessons for pupils, using a good range of resources, strategies and assessment information. Interactive whiteboards also help to make learning exciting. Teachers make pupils aware of what they are learning and why, and this contributes well towards pupils' understanding of their work. Classes are well managed and relationships are a strength. As a result, pupils are well behaved, keen to learn and enjoy their learning. The deployment of teaching assistants, especially to support those pupils who find learning difficult, is good. This ensures that supported pupils are able to join in all class activities and make good progress. Teachers make good use of paired discussions. Teachers plan in detail to meet the different needs of pupils. However, on occasions, pupils' knowledge and skills are not always fully extended because the work provided lacks greater challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and it meets statutory requirements. The literacy and numeracy programmes have been updated to take into account the new national frameworks. The provision for, and the use of, ICT to promote pupils' learning across the curriculum is extensive. The programme for personal, social and health education, including the focus on improving pupils' thinking skills through the philosophy for children initiative, contributes effectively to pupils' personal development. Planning promotes cross-curricular links mostly in the core subjects, but it is limited, as is the progressive building of skills based on pupils' previous learning in many foundation subjects. Music is a particular strength of the school and pupils achieve well in this subject. The additional needs of pupils with learning difficulties are met successfully by tailoring the curriculum, particularly in the basic skills. As a result, these pupils make good progress. The provision for a modern foreign language, a good range of educational visits, visitors with specialist knowledge, and extra-curricular activities, all enrich the curriculum and add to pupils' enjoyment of their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of the pupils is at the heart of the school's work, and adults ensure that there is good pastoral care. Good use is made of outside agencies to support pupils, for example for those who have hearing impairment and those who find learning difficult. Child protection procedures are good, and staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be distressed or anxious. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Routine safety checks and risk assessments ensure that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living, and are regularly reminded of the need to take care, for instance when moving around the school. Pupils have targets for improving their work and, whilst some are a little unsure of them, most have a clear understanding about what they need to do to make their work better. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, adding advice about how pupils can improve their work, although there is some inconsistency in routinely doing this and following up pupils' responses to the advice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since its previous inspection, the school has worked with a sense of purpose and commitment to improving identified areas of weakness. The headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, has a clear determination to raise standards. Staff and governors share this drive so that there is no complacency. The headteacher has a high profile around the school. His perceptive checks on teaching and learning, good support for staff and the careful deployment of them, and good relationships with pupils and parents have all contributed to the school's growing success. Self-evaluation is accurate, increasingly involving key staff who fulfil their roles with confidence. They are responding well to opportunities to develop their skills, and are becoming increasingly influential. The rigorous analysis of all assessment data provides senior managers with reliable information about pupils' progress in each year group. This has enabled them to make interventions to support learning and has helped to drive improvement so far. Governors are well placed to hold the school to account and are very supportive of the school. There are good plans in place to enable them to play an active role in school improvement planning and evaluation, but these have yet to be implemented.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newcroft Primary School, Shepshed LE12 9DU

Thank you very much for making the inspectors welcome when we came to visit recently and for being so friendly and polite. Over the last four terms that I have been visiting I have seen the school improve and I agree with what one of you said to me that, 'You learn more now and learn better,' which shows how well the school has improved.

We found that your school is now a good school and no longer needs to be visited regularly by inspectors. Your headteacher, your teachers and all the staff working in your school have done a good job to improve it over the last 18 months. So much so that overall you are making good progress by the time you finish in Year 5. You do well in reading and writing and teachers know that standards in mathematics need to be raised further. You can help by remembering the rules you have to use to do calculations and your teachers will help you to understand better how to solve problems.

All the adults working in the school care for you and look after you well. They encourage you to eat healthily and keep fit and it is pleasing to see that very many of you take part in activities that you enjoy. Lessons are interesting and exciting, often giving you opportunities to talk with partners. The introduction of the philosophy for children course and the chance to learn French also provides you with a rich diet of lessons. Teachers' written comments and discussions with you about how you can do better are mostly good. I have asked Mr Goulding to make sure that this happens across all classes so that you make even better progress in your work.

I have enjoyed my time visiting your school. I hope that all of you go on to do even better and send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala Her Majesty's Inspector

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