

Caversham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109778
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	325026
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	451
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Livesey
Headteacher	Mrs Chris Tomkins
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hemdean Road Caversham Reading RG4 7RA
Telephone number	01189 015 454
Fax number	01189 015 456

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how the school is improving the progress of the more able pupils in Key Stage 2 in science; the strategies employed to meet the needs of younger children in the Reception class; how well the school promotes community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from discussions with pupils, staff and governors and analysis of school documentation and of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This large school serves pupils from a wide area. It is popular and oversubscribed. Most pupils are from White British families and there are small numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. Children are admitted to the Reception classes three times a year, although most begin in the September of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday. This is a new arrangement and only began in September 2008. Children's attainment on entry is usually above average. Fewer pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their needs are mainly emotional, behavioural or related to speech, language and communication. The school has gained a large number of awards in recent years, including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools and Activemark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Caversham Primary is an exceptional school, which provides an outstanding education for its pupils. High levels of staff commitment, coupled with their boundless energy and enthusiasm, mean that pupils are constantly stimulated and excited by the wide variety of opportunities on offer. Central to this excellent provision is the very effective leadership of the headteacher who gives a firm steer to all aspects of the school's work. Supported by a hard-working team of senior staff and governors, she has built extremely effective relationships with parents, who provide extensive support for the school and their children's education.

Parents really appreciate the headteacher's approachability and the way in which she is always available to answer any queries or concerns. In response, they are quick to offer their time to support the school in many different ways. More than two hundred parents and volunteers help on a regular basis, willingly sharing their skills and talents with the pupils, for example in netball, gardening and chess. As one volunteer said, 'Once you get involved it's difficult to leave - the children and staff are so wonderful!'

Pupils are equally as delighted with their school. They describe exciting lessons in science, value their teachers' enthusiasm and appreciate the way their efforts are recognised. Pupils 'inspect' their school annually and their report provides an accurate assessment of school performance. 'This is a happy school and we like to have fun', wrote one of the inspection team. Attendance levels are very high. Pupils enjoy all the after school clubs, especially the sports, in which a very high proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 participate. The school gained Activemark and Healthy Schools awards for its work in promoting health and fitness. Pupils know how to keep safe from bullying although they say this happens rarely. Pupils play an active role in supporting the local community, with weekly visits to a local home for the elderly and regular concerts performed for family and friends. They are also extremely aware of environmental issues, many supporting the school Eco-Club, recycling and fair trade activities. They are just beginning, with parents and teachers, to cultivate their own vegetables in the recently acquired allotments at the back of the school. Pupils' excellent academic achievement and their high levels of confidence and personal responsibility mean they are extremely well prepared for their future education.

Pupils achieve very well throughout the school and reach extremely high standards in the national tests and assessments. The proportion attaining the higher levels in the tests is far higher than in most schools. Standards in mathematics are exceptionally high, with 20% of pupils passing the GCSE Foundation Tier examination and achieving Level 6 in the National Curriculum tests in 2008. Nonetheless, the school is not complacent. Detailed analysis of assessments last year revealed that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in science had dropped slightly. Prompt action by senior leaders and the science coordinator resulted in a review of curriculum plans to ensure they provided enough challenge for the most able pupils. A number of events, for example the 'Up in the Air' science focus week, have raised the profile of science within the school and have enthused pupils tremendously. School records of pupils' progress this year indicate measurable improvement, with an extremely high number of pupils set to reach the higher Level 5 in the tests.

Pupils with behavioural or speech and language difficulties receive excellent support and make very effective progress. Their needs are carefully identified and a wide range of individually tailored programmes is implemented to help them take the next steps in their learning. As with

all pupils, their progress is very carefully tracked, to identify which programmes are working best and what further action needs to be taken. Pupils learning English as an additional language benefit from the high levels of support they receive from their teachers and assistants. The school has invested time and energy in training its teachers to adapt their strategies to meet the needs of these pupils more fully. This has paid off in their increased progress and engagement in lessons.

It is not surprising that pupils do well at Caversham because the teaching is of a very high standard and pupils strive their utmost to succeed. They know their targets and what they have to do to improve. Teachers capitalise on these positive personal qualities extremely well in lessons. In an outstanding science lesson on electric circuits in Year 6, for example, the teacher's rapid assessment of pupils' progress enabled her to reorganise activities in order to ensure pupils' understanding was fully extended. Pupils quickly responded by changing groups with a minimum of fuss, so that the lesson was not disrupted and they were quickly able to resume their investigations.

Pupils are developing into thoughtful and sensitive young people, who respect one another's differences with great maturity. The school is quick to involve pupils and their families who are from different cultural backgrounds and faiths, and encourages them to share their beliefs and practices. A very successful International Day recently celebrated a wide range of cultures, and pupils thoroughly enjoyed all the activities on offer, including dancing, painting and storytelling. Well-established links with schools catering for children with different needs and from different backgrounds in the United Kingdom and abroad help Caversham pupils gain a greater understanding of life in different communities. The school has identified the need to extend the wide range of opportunities offered to pupils in this respect and is embarking on an exciting programme dealing with global citizenship.

Despite the school's size, every pupil is an individual at Caversham. Staff know pupils extremely well and are quick to notice if any problems arise. All necessary precautions are taken to ensure pupils' safety. A daily risk assessment of Reception classrooms is an example of the school's attention to detail. Governors play an important role in ensuring pupils' health and safety by carrying out regular checks of the premises.

The school is extremely well led and managed. One of its many outstanding aspects is the way that new and less experienced members of staff are nurtured and supported so that they become leaders themselves. They relish the challenge of new responsibilities and are keen to offer ideas because they know they will be valued. Governors do a great job in supporting the school and in monitoring its performance. A successful committee structure enables informed decisions to be made quickly and confidently. The exceptional levels of commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher, staff and governors mean the school looks likely to go from strength to strength in the future. Parents believe this too. One wrote, echoing the views of many, 'This school is excellent and reaches far beyond the education of children. It is a community itself with very strong connections with parents. It provides a very welcoming and friendly environment which is thanks to its dedicated staff and strong leadership.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

In response to the recent changes in admission arrangements, the staff have reviewed provision carefully to make sure the needs of younger children are met effectively. Induction procedures are excellent. Successful links with pre-school providers make sure that children's needs are

well known even before they start school. Home visits and visits to school help children ease confidently into school life.

The activities and experiences organised for children are wide-ranging and extremely exciting. Although the premises, especially the outdoor area, are restricted in size, staff work hard to ensure that the range of activities is not affected. Children, directed by 'police officers', ride bicycles and scooters around imaginary roads. Others paint, draw and make models, and organise 'princess parties', making pretend cakes and chocolates from playdough. A strong emphasis on creativity, using art and music to stimulate children's ideas, helps children develop confidence as well as extend their vocabulary successfully. They make excellent progress over the year, with most reaching, and a considerable number exceeding, the goals expected for their age by the time they transfer to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- This school has no significant weaknesses but should continue to implement its global awareness programme, as identified in the school improvement plan.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Caversham Primary School, Reading, RG4 7RA

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school a short while ago. We enjoyed speaking to so many of you and looking at your work. Everything we saw and heard convinced us that you go to an excellent school. We were especially impressed with the way you are all so well behaved and kind to each other. You work hard in lessons, but are always ready to help others if necessary. You are very polite to each other and to all the adults. Your school is a really happy place. Your parents said that they were very pleased with the school. They and all the volunteers that work in the school deserve a special 'thank you' for all their efforts.

You make excellent progress and reach high standards in your work because teaching is extremely good and you are all very keen to learn. The teachers work very hard to make your lessons interesting and fun. Science looks especially exciting and many of you said that science is your favourite subject. The adults in the school look after you exceptionally well. The youngest children in Reception settle in quickly and get a really good start to their education.

The people in charge are doing a great job in running the school. They work hard to make sure the buildings are safe and that you all receive the education you deserve. We could see from some of the photos and displays that you have had great fun learning about different faiths and cultures, including some found in your community. We know that you already have links with a number of schools overseas. Your teachers told us that they are about to start an exciting project to increase your understanding of global issues and we think that this is an excellent idea.

Thank you once again for being so welcoming and we wish you good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Mary Summers

Lead Inspector