

Clarkson Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110649
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325192
Inspection date	19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	212
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 Nick Drew
Headteacher	Mrs Pam Clark
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Trafford Road Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 2ES
Telephone number	01945584867
Fax number	01945474538

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; attendance; safeguarding procedures; the quality of academic guidance and how well leadership impacts on school improvement. 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. Observations of lessons and pupils' work, discussions with the headteacher, governors and pupils, the parental questionnaires and school self-evaluation documents provided inspection evidence.

Description of the school

This infant school is situated in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Attainment on entry is below that normally expected for children of their age. The proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is above average. Most children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the September after their third birthday. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Identified learning difficulties include speech and language, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than in most schools and a smaller than average proportion is at the early stages of learning English. The school has achieved the Active Sports Mark for its effective delivery of the National Sports Strategy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils get a good start to their education at this good school. Pupils of all abilities settle quickly into school life. This is because of the very strong partnership that exists between the school and parents. One parent, echoing the views of others, said, 'This is a very well run and happy school with high standards. Teachers are helpful and interested in pupils and parents alike'. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are really pleased with the care their children receive and the progress they make.

Pupils' personal development is good. This is because all staff give pupils a committed and effective level of care, guidance and support. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn to reflect about their own and others' feelings well. They enjoy school and most behave well, playing together happily and with a high level of confidence. Through the school's important work in broadening pupils' horizons, they learn about and respect cultural differences. They understand the need to keep safe and act appropriately in school. As a result of good work by the school, attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of the principles of healthy eating and show enthusiasm for the wide range of physical exercise on offer. They respond well to opportunities to contribute to their school and wider community. They feel safe and happy because they are well cared for. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' safety are robust. The school works in close partnership with parents and makes strenuous and successful efforts to involve all groups of parents in the life of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given effective support. The school is very successful in its support of more vulnerable pupils, a particularly strong feature of its work. Academic guidance is good. Pupils are aware of the importance of their targets and progress is tracked carefully, so that the next steps in learning are swiftly identified. Pupils make good progress and work effectively together: they are well prepared for the future.

The school's leadership is successfully focused on improving achievement. This helps to explain why pupils attained average standards in 2008 tests, which, from their low starting points, demonstrates good progress. Standards have improved most in reading and writing since 2007 because of the school's successful drive in this area. Standards in mathematics have also improved in this period but not at the same rate. This is mainly because work set in lessons, although separated into different ability levels, does not always challenge more able pupils as well as it might.

An important reason for the school's success is its use of a detailed system to track pupils' attainment and progress, and regular meetings are held between the headteacher and class teachers. Discussions about pupils who seem to be underachieving determines what extra support would be useful. A considerable amount of effective small group work assists pupils to make good progress in writing, and they also benefit from additional help in reading. However, the same level of assistance is not available in mathematics. Good support for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities allows them to achieve well. Individual education plans are tailored to their needs, supporting them towards reaching specific and measurable targets.

Achievement is good because teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use their considerable subject knowledge to good effect. The best lessons regularly feature the effective use of questioning, with pupils given time to reflect on their learning. Often, teachers explain clearly how to structure and set out work. In a typically good lesson, the introduction was used

particularly well to engage and motivate pupils, which promoted their enjoyment of learning. Teachers regularly refer to pupils' targets during lessons, helping them to see how these can be reached. Marking of pupils' work is affirming and encouraging; however, written comments do not always tell them what they need to do to improve.

Pupils enjoy their lessons because of the rich curriculum. They talk enthusiastically about the school, citing a wide range of interesting activities. The school is an attractive and stimulating learning environment, and work displayed around it celebrates pupils' writing, creative and artistic skills. Developing the grounds is a priority, and there have been many recent additions such as the new garden areas. A wide range of visits and visitors to the school successfully complements the curriculum, and a good range of after school activities from football to pottery allows them to develop a range of skills. Pupils look forward to the regular residential visit planned for Year 2 pupils.

Good leadership and management have brought about many improvements since the last inspection. A significant development is the improved use of pupils' targets, which helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve and engages them in their learning. Strong and purposeful leadership by the headteacher and senior leadership team mean that the school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Subject leaders manage their areas well. The school's leadership works closely with the community. For example, leaders ensure that community groups are included successfully into school activities. They attend school meetings and productions, and regularly support pupils' learning by working as volunteers in the school. Despite its standing in the community and the high regard in which it is held by parents, the school has plans to further engage with parents and support them as partners in helping their children to achieve. Pupils develop their understanding of global issues well and regularly raise funds for people in other countries who are less fortunate than themselves. Governance is good; governors work successfully to challenge the school's leadership to maintain improvement. The school is well positioned to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the Nursery, their skills are below what is typical for their age. Skilled teaching, combined with sensitive care, ensures they make good progress overall and they reach broadly average standards by the time they enter Year 1. The development of early literacy skills is a particular strength in both Nursery and Reception. Leadership and management of this key stage are good and exemplary induction arrangements prepare children well for their first days in school. The EYFS team works very well together to plan an interesting range of activities that cover all areas of learning. There is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that the children can initiate for themselves. Children enjoy learning through 'hands on', practical activities, such as making sandwiches for a picnic. Their understanding is extended well through challenging tasks, such as working together in a group to construct the set and enact the story of Rama and Sita. However, children are not yet able to move freely between indoor activities and the excellent outdoor learning area. This means that some exciting learning opportunities are missed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on good provision in the EYFS to ensure free access to outdoor learning throughout the year.
- Raise the level of challenge in mathematics for the more able pupils.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clarkson Infants School, Wisbech, PE13 2ES

Thank you for helping me to find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a happy and friendly school. Good things about your school include the fact that:

- you make good progress in your work
- there is a very good partnership in place between the school and your parents
- you concentrate and behave well in lessons
- you enjoy school and all the activities your teachers plan for you
- the school environment is super
- the school leaders have very good ideas about ways to improve the school
- teaching is good and the teachers work hard to make lessons interesting
- staff care for you really well and listen to you thoughtfully.

I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- make better use of the outside environment to support learning in the Nursery and Reception classes
- give those of you who are really good at mathematics harder work to help you do even better.

Keep working hard to meet your targets and enjoy all the things you are learning at school.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones

Lead inspector