

Coton-in-the-Elms CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112812
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325693
Inspection date	3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	108
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 Geoff Bird
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Elmslea Avenue Coton-in-the-Elms Swadlincote Derbyshire DE12 8HE

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	3 December 2008
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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 extent to which improvements in standards and achievement are set to continue and whether standards of writing are catching up with standards in other subjects, especially for boys
- whether improvements to provision have been sufficient to make this an outstanding school in relation to current outcomes for pupils
- whether leadership, management and governance procedures are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that standards and quality continue to improve and give the school a strong capacity for further improvement.

Evidence was gathered from classroom visits and from discussions with staff, pupils and governors. The inspectors also examined pupils' work and school documents, especially assessment and safeguarding information. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Coton-in-the-Elms is smaller than the average primary school. This Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) school serves the local village but about half of the pupils come from homes beyond the immediate vicinity. The school also educates children from the traveller community. Virtually all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and, of the few with minority ethnic heritage, only one speaks English as an additional language. Social circumstances in the area are broadly average, although the low proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals does not accurately reflect the hardship that some families face. On entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children's attainments are generally similar to those expected of four-year-olds. However, the make-up of the school's small intakes varies markedly and so attainment on entry is considerably lower than normal in some year groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that in schools nationally and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is high for a school of this size.

The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark and Artsmark and has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Coton-in -the-Elms provides a good education for its pupils. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, the school has established an extremely strong 'track record' of improvement in recent years. This school strives for excellence in all aspects of its work. Whilst it still has a way to go in some areas, high quality provision is already beginning to impact on pupils' learning and achievement. As a result, standards are rising and the rate of pupils' progress is improving. An exceptionally strong feature of the school is the way staff use highly effective partnerships with neighbouring schools, outside providers and support agencies to broaden the curriculum and to provide excellent equality of opportunity for all pupils, from the most needy to the most able.

Children get an excellent start in EYFS. They gain knowledge, understanding and skills that lay extremely good foundations for learning throughout school. The school has successfully addressed issues that have sometimes restricted progress in Years 1 and 2. All pupils in Key Stage 1 now make at least the progress that they should and increasing numbers now exceed the expected rate of progress. Importantly, there is evidence that the school's measures to raise standards in writing are paying off. Results from the most recent national assessments for seven-year-olds show a substantial narrowing of the gap between standards in writing and other core subjects. Standards are also rising in Key Stage 2. The most recent results show marked increases in the numbers of pupils attaining the above average Level 5. Standards are above average in reading and mathematics and are exceptionally high in science. However, improvements in pupils' writing, now evident in Key Stage 1, have not yet fed through to the end of Key Stage 2. Consequently, standards in writing, though broadly average, are lower than in other core subjects.

Standards are rising because teaching is good and recent measures to improve the curriculum - now outstanding in its own right - are beginning to feed through to the classroom in a way that improves pupils' learning and achievement. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Lessons are well planned and so learning proceeds at a brisk pace and builds progressively. In most lessons, teachers manage pupils' exuberant responses effectively but, occasionally, staff have to work hard to restore calm and at such times pupils' progress is reduced. Teachers' use of assessment, both to set work that is challenging for pupils of all abilities and to provide excellent academic guidance, is highly effective, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. The '11th day assessment books' work particularly well in this respect. Support for pupils who find learning difficult is effective and allows these pupils to progress at a similar rate to all others.

The creative linking of subjects gives relevance and adds to pupils' enjoyment. Another strength of the curriculum is the way staff integrate the use of information and communication technology (ICT) into pupils' learning in all subjects. As a result, many pupils attain standards in ICT that are above those normally expected at this age. Similarly, a strong focus on the visual and expressive arts results in good standards in subjects such as art and design. This quality in depth throughout the curriculum, along with highly effective provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), turns out confident and well-rounded youngsters and prepares them well for their lives as young adults.

Standards of care, guidance and support for pupils and their families are outstanding. The school meets all current safeguarding requirements and pastoral care is excellent. This is a school that will always 'go the extra mile'. For example, the school's outreach to the local

traveller community has been extremely successful. Whilst some attendance issues remain, there have been marked improvements to attitudes to school that reflect in the progress that many traveller children now make. Moreover, because this quality of care extends to all pupils, levels of personal development and well-being are exceptionally high. A particular strength is the extent to which this school includes parents in all aspects of their children's education. Strong links are forged when children start in Reception and the willingness of all staff to share information and respond to parents' concerns sustains excellent relationships throughout the child's time in school. The Parents' Council, the Friends of the School Association and the work of the governing body all foster parental involvement effectively. These forums give parents a real voice in school matters, which, along with regular news and information about children's progress, results in exceptionally high levels of parental support and approval. Parents clearly think that this is a 'great school'. One parent wrote: 'A fantastic, open, friendly village school with excellent teachers and facilities....where children flourish both emotionally and academically'.

Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about school. When asked to nominate a good feature of the school, one replied: 'It's hard to think of a particular thing - it's all brilliant!'. Pupils have such positive attitudes because they have a real voice in matters that affect them. For example, when staff asked pupils what helped them to learn effectively, they put educational visits high on the list. As a result, the school strengthened this part of the revised curriculum. Because pupils' views are respected and they are given responsibilities, such as caring for younger pupils, many develop levels of maturity beyond their years. Their understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles reflects clearly in their lively and energetic play and commitment to sporting activities - 'This is a really sporty school', remarked one pupil. That said, they play responsibly and safely, using apparatus sensibly and showing consideration for others. This quality of response enables pupils to make a strong contribution to the school as a caring community. They also contribute to the wider community, for example by extending their carnival into the whole village. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Most pupils are sensitive to things of beauty and behave in a way that indicates a clear understanding of what is right. Relationships are excellent and the school does much to promote community cohesion by fostering citizenship and values based on mutual respect. Pupils learn about the village and surrounding areas and so gain valuable insights into local culture. However, their understanding of other cultures and of peoples with different ways of life is more limited and so they do not yet have the wider perspectives needed for life in an ethnically diverse society.

The school is going from strength to strength. It has an exceptionally good capacity for further improvement because leadership and management at all levels are highly effective. The headteacher has built an able team of senior staff and is actively fostering the leadership potential of those who are newly qualified. The headteacher gives all leaders a real role in school improvement and ensures that they have the training, time and resources to 'deliver the goods.' Governors contribute effectively to school management, although recent changes in governors' responsibilities leave some needing further training for their role.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

EYFS provision is outstanding. Excellent liaison with parents and with the main pre-school setting ensures a seamless entry into Reception. All staff have a thorough understanding of how to create a fun-filled and welcoming environment that challenges children and promotes highly effective learning. Attainment on entry varies according to the make-up of small intake

groups but, whatever their starting points, children thrive, make excellent progress and many attain standards above those normally expected of five-year-olds.

Welfare and safety within EYFS are well established, ensuring that children feel extremely happy and safe. Personal development is outstanding. At this young age, children develop extremely positive attitudes to learning and enjoy excellent relationships with adults and with others alike. The EYFS team's drive to develop independence and raise children's self-esteem really works. As a result, children love to take part in games and imaginative play in well-resourced spaces such as the Santa's Workshop. The outside area provides a wide range of games and activities that enable children to experience the wider world at first hand. The school rightly plans to create a covered area so that children's outdoor learning can continue during inclement weather.

The highly skilled EYFS leader manages the provision with care and rigour. The well-planned curriculum provides challenging opportunities for children to achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning. Teaching is outstanding. The buzz of activity in the classroom indicates children's love of learning. Staff plan all activities with the unique child in mind and give many opportunities for play and free choice, alongside adult-led activities. Systems for recording children's attainments give staff a very effective check on individual progress and enable them to meet children's needs effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing throughout school, but particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Strengthen pupils' understanding of the beliefs and ways of life of peoples from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that are different from their own.

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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?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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	3
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	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?	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?	2
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	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**

4 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Coton-in-the-Elms Church of England Primary School, Swadlincote, DE12 8HE

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago, along with my colleague, Mrs Merrick. Thank you for making us so welcome and for taking time to talk to me and to answer our questions. We particularly enjoyed seeing parts of the rehearsals for your Christmas concerts. I hope that the performances went well and that your parents and carers thoroughly enjoyed them.

I thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are many good things happening in your school.

- Children in Reception get off to an excellent start in school.
- Almost all of you make good progress and overall standards are above average.
- Staff make absolutely sure that everybody has the opportunity to succeed.
- The school is extremely good at bringing in outside help to make learning, for example in art and music, more interesting and enjoyable.
- You get on extremely well with one another and most of you behave well.
- Your teachers and other adults care for you when you have problems, make sure that you are safe and help you grow into confident, independent learners.
- Mrs Clayton, the staff, governors and parents work hard to make your school a better place and ideas that came from pupils have helped to improve the school.

There is not much that needs to be improved at Coton-in-the-Elms but Mrs Clayton would like everything to be perfect. Therefore, we have suggested that your teachers should do everything they can to help you to improve your writing. You can help by trying really hard to follow their advice in your next pieces of work. We have also asked them to make sure that you learn more about the wider world and about people with different ways of life, so that you will be even better prepared for adult life.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Coton-in-the-Elms Church of England Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector