

Northway Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115563
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326224
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	142
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	Michael Fesemeyer
Headteacher	Lynn Williams
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Virginia Road Northway Tewkesbury GL20 8PT
Telephone number	01684 293447
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Age group	4–7
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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:

- The influence of teaching, the curriculum and academic guidance on pupils' progress in writing, particularly for boys and pupils with learning difficulties.
- The quality of pupils' personal development and well-being, including their understanding of modern multi-ethnic society.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in ensuring good achievement for all pupils, particularly in writing.

Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress; visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work; observation of an assembly; discussions with staff, governors, parents and pupils; and analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. 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 of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few from other ethnic backgrounds are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or problems with speech, language and communication. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision comprises of two Reception classes. Most children entering Reception have attended the independently run community nursery on the school's site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It ensures that pupils achieve well academically and make good progress in their personal development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives. Outstanding features of the school's work are the pastoral care and the partnership with parents and outside agencies. These significant strengths ensure that each pupil thrives. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'All the teachers really go the extra mile to include everyone and make them feel welcome.' Another observed that, 'Not only do they provide well for our children but also they run courses for adults to teach us how to help our children.' Community cohesion is promoted well through the school's responsiveness to the needs of families and the local community.

Pupils feel safe and secure in the school's welcoming and caring environment. As a result, they gain good self-confidence, learn to care for others and behave extremely well. Pupils' sensible attitudes and behaviour help the school to be an orderly place. Pupils welcome those who join the school late and do much to help the few who enter with little understanding of English. Pupils' awareness of how to keep fit and healthy is good. They know, for example, that 'fruit is good for you' and that physical activities, such as running, 'make you lose energy'.

Pupils enjoy school tremendously and speak with excitement about the wide range of clubs, including football, golf, cooking and art. This enjoyment is reflected in the rising attendance rate, which is now above average. Pupils are making a good and developing contribution to the community. They are proud of their school council and know that their ideas and views matter. They have, for example, played an important role in getting 'buddy benches' established on the playground. They know that this development helps to make sure that no one is lonely at playtimes. Pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own has improved since the last inspection and the school is looking at ways of developing it further.

When children start in Reception, their skills and understanding are a little below the levels that are typical for their age. In particular, there are weaknesses in many children's communication, language and social skills. Children get off to a good start and reach broadly average standards by the time they transfer to Year 1. Further good progress by the end of Year 2 results in pupils reaching standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, girls tend to reach much higher standards than boys, particularly in writing.

There is a marked difference between the overall standards of boys and girls when they enter the school, with girls generally doing better even at this early stage. Although the gap between boys' and girls' attainment narrows, with boys progressing as well as girls, it remains significant at the end of Year 2. The school has introduced a variety of strategies to accelerate all pupils' progress in writing. 'Talking tins' allow boys and girls to record sentences before writing them. These resources are proving particularly effective in supporting lower attaining pupils and those who have learning difficulties. One-to-one mentoring also assists the learning of boys with low standards. Meaningful contexts are created for writing and these are enjoyed by both boys and girls and help to build their confidence as writers. Pupils in Year 2, for example, responded enthusiastically to a project to develop their writing skills that

involved them in looking for donkeys on the school field. They found real ones there on the third day. Even though much good action has already been taken, the school recognises that even more work is necessary to improve boys' standards, particularly in writing.

Pupils' progress is good because teaching and the curriculum are good. There are examples of outstanding practice in Year 2, where teaching is exceptionally well matched to all pupils' needs. Teaching assistants are used extremely well, particularly to support lower attaining pupils or those who have learning difficulties. At the same time, the most able pupils are challenged fully. Boys and girls in this year group respond exceptionally well to the adults' high expectations of the standards all of them are capable of attaining. Pupils' progress in writing in this year group also benefits from exceptionally good guidance through marking and targets. They are told clearly what they have done well and what they need to work on next.

Not all teaching and guidance to pupils are as good as the best. There are instances of satisfactory lessons and some guidance is also only satisfactory. When this is the case, the attention given to the next steps in learning for individuals or groups of different ability is not sharp enough. Lessons focus on what pupils will do rather than on why they are doing it. When marking is satisfactory, rather than good, it does not tell pupils clearly what they should do next in writing and mathematics.

The school has moved on well since its last inspection because leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction. Staff with key areas of responsibility, such as for English, mathematics and special educational needs, contribute well to the school's development. Governance has improved significantly. Governors now provide a good balance of support and challenge. The school has a good capacity to improve further. As one parent said, 'They are not complacent and are constantly striving to improve.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents are delighted with how well their children settle in Reception. As one observed, 'We couldn't have asked for a better introduction to school life.' The school works very well with the on-site nursery, other pre-school settings and parents to ensure that children make a smooth transfer to school. Children make good gains in all aspects of their learning and development, in particular improving their communication, language and social skills. Their good progress is evident, for example, in their real enjoyment of writing. High quality attention to children's welfare results in excellent behaviour, good relationships and children thoroughly enjoying school.

Teaching is good and based on accurate assessment of children's individual needs. The curriculum provides a wide range of stimulating activities indoors and outside. Particularly effective use is made of the school grounds, such as when children discovered soft toy animals hidden in different areas. Photographs were taken and then used to promote a purposeful whole-class writing activity.

The provision for Reception children is led and managed well. The school is working to improve it further. It is rightly focusing on developing opportunities for children to make choices about activities and for them to move more freely between the indoor and outdoor areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards attained by boys, particularly in writing, to match the high performance of girls.
- Ensure that teaching and the guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work always focus on the most important next steps in learning.

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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	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	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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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**

5 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Northway Infant School, Tewkesbury GL20 8PT

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. You were very friendly and welcoming to us. We enjoyed watching your lessons and looking at your work. It was good to talk with the school council, who are doing a really important job. They were very good at telling us what you think about your school.

We found out that you go to a good school. You get off to a good start in Reception and then make more good progress by the end of Year 2. You learn well because teaching is good. You also have a good range of activities in addition to your ordinary lessons. These help to make learning interesting and exciting, such as when Year 2 found the donkeys on the school field. You also have many clubs that help you to learn new things.

You really enjoy school and your behaviour is excellent. You do a lot to make the school a pleasant and safe place and have a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy.

The adults in school are always looking for ways to make the school even better. To help, we have asked them to do two things in particular:

- Make sure that all of you, but especially the boys, reach the highest standards you can in writing.
- Make sure that teaching and the advice given to you about how to improve your work always show you clearly how to take the next steps in your learning.

You can help by continuing to be such pleasant and friendly young people and by always doing your best work.

Yours faithfully

Alison Grainger Lead inspector