

# Cowley Hill School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117099
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326525
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Hall

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	294
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jackie Spriggs
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Terry Willis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Winstre Road Borehamwood Hertfordshire WD6 5DP
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8 9532218
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8 2360174

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326525

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school in Borehamwood. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is slightly above average. Almost half of the pupils are from a range of ethnic groups with 32 different languages spoken. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There is specialist provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties and, therefore, a much higher than average percentage of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school holds Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and most of the teaching staff started in the school in September 2008.

## 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 that has improved considerably in all areas of provision in the last year. Pivotal to the success of the recent changes has been the total determination of the headteacher to improve the school's provision for its pupils. A very large number of parents who returned inspection questionnaires indicated their wholehearted approval of recent improvement as summed up by one who comments 'there has been an incredible transformation in the school since the appointment of the headteacher and her subsequent recruitment of the teaching staff'.

Children enter the Nursery with mixed skills which are generally below national expectations, especially in their ability to communicate with others. They make satisfactory overall progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In recent years standards have been below national averages in Year 2 and Year 6. During this year there has been a transformation and pupils in Years 1 to 6 now make good overall progress, and for some this is even better. Standards are now above average when pupils leave the school in Year 6 but this is not yet the case in every year group. With much improved teaching and a very well considered programme of support for those who need a little extra help, standards have risen and are now good. Pupils from many different backgrounds, including those speaking English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. This helps pupils prepare well for their future economic well-being.

The personal development of pupils is good and contains some outstanding features. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is now excellent. This leads to pupils of all ages saying how they really enjoy school. They are confident there is no bullying and know it would not be tolerated. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe including in very active outdoor play. Most have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, although there is more to do to persuade some families of the benefits of healthy packed lunches. Pupils have good opportunities to take on responsibilities, including the effective work of the older ones who act as 'play pals' and help improve the physical and social skills of others.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Where teaching is outstanding there are lots of demands made on pupils through well planned tasks and the effective use of resources. However, at times teaching, though still satisfactory, is not as effective. Although staff focus well on specific groups of pupils, tasks for others do not challenge them sufficiently. Curriculum planning is good and there are some well-considered links between subjects and effective use of visitors that make learning interesting. The care, guidance and support of pupils are also good. Staff know and care for pupils well even in the large school environment. The support for those with learning difficulties is excellent and enables those with additional needs, especially those with speech and language difficulties, to make considerable progress towards their personal targets.

Leadership and management are good overall and with some excellent features. The very strong and totally determined headteacher is driving the school community forward. She is very well supported by other staff including the deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. However, there are areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage that require further improvement. Governance is good and the school is now well placed to make further improvements.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mixed early learning experiences. Their initial skills are generally below expectations for their age especially in their early speaking, listening, reading and writing. A considerable number have limited English when they start school. The majority make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and often exceed the targets for their age in their personal and social development. However, progress in other areas is mixed and something rightly identified by the school as requiring further improvement. Overall, children come close to expectations at the end of Reception but do not reach these fully. Staff work hard and with commitment to the children but not always to best effect. While teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory, planning is not effective enough in identifying the aims of activities and how pupils are to develop key skills. Therefore, staff miss opportunities to ensure that they fully challenge the children or help them develop their communication skills further. The curriculum is largely satisfactory. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly satisfactory. The school is planning carefully for future development under the leadership of a recently appointed Early Years team leader who has already begun to work with colleagues to improve provision. There are well advanced plans to refurbish the accommodation to make best use of the space and resources available.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the planning of activities and teaching of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage focuses more clearly on the consistent development of key skills.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently effective and that all tasks make appropriate demands on pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In recent years standards have been below and sometimes significantly below national averages at the age of seven and eleven. Data from teacher assessments and national tests show that many pupils underachieved. For instance, boys of White British heritage did not do as well as similar pupils nationally while girls and other groups of pupils often did better. This year, in contrast, a considerably better number of pupils in Years 2 and 6 not only achieved the expected levels for their age but more also achieved the higher levels, particularly in writing and mathematics. This indicates above average standards. The considerable improvement is due to good quality teaching and learning and very effective intervention programmes where pupils of all abilities receive targeted support to help them achieve the next level. This supports equality of opportunity very effectively and has raised the self-esteem of all pupils leading to sometimes considerable progress. Overall, pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The general demeanor of pupils shows they are very happy to come to school and their improving attendance confirms this. They have very positive attitudes towards their learning and each other, and their behaviour is excellent. This makes a significant contribution to the school's calm and friendly learning environment. The very good personal development curriculum has

had a considerable impact on the behaviour of pupils both in class and at playtime. Pupils feel their views are given due attention. Many, for example, said how much they liked the range of sports available as well as the enrichment activities such as dance and drumming sessions. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most empathise with others, as reflected in their total silence when watching videos of evacuated children in World War 2. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities now available to them and speak enthusiastically and with pride about the progress the school has made. They are confident that adults will listen to them and address their concerns. Pupils contribute well to their community through the school council.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good because most pupils make good progress as a result of lessons that are stimulating and enjoyable. A particular strength of the teaching is the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers care about their charges who then feel confident to try their best. Pupils respond well to opportunities for independent learning and work well in teams. In one outstanding lesson younger pupils were learning how to use their voice to make a story interesting. The teacher gave an excellent example whilst the class listened attentively and with obvious enjoyment and then worked in pairs telling each other an exciting story. Teaching assistants are used carefully to support pupils in class and their work is of a high standard. The quality of teaching, however, can be inconsistent, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

There is a good balance between the teaching of core subjects, such as English and mathematics, and other areas of learning. A strength is the way aspects from a wide range of subjects have been linked together which the pupils say makes learning enjoyable. For example, in a Year 5/6 project pupils' understanding of the life of ordinary people during World War 2 was greatly enhanced by opportunities to write newspaper reports, use rationing books as a starting point for linked mathematics activities and to cook war time recipes in design and technology.

The school has particular strengths in the areas of physical education and drama. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are provided and there is a good range of educational visits that link effectively to the curriculum. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 visit the Tate gallery as part of their famous people project. An extensive range of visitors to school makes the curriculum interesting both during assemblies and in the course of actual lessons. Occasionally, pupils are not presented with the highest level of challenge in tasks when staff focus on other groups.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good care and support offered by the school emanates from the strength of the relationships between the teachers and pupils. Procedures to safeguard pupils are effective and all staff have received training on child protection. Risk assessments are carried out for activities both on and off the school site, although some have yet to be completed and others are 'light-touch'. There is effective working with other agencies to support vulnerable children. Close liaison with

the attendance officer has improved the attendance of a few persistent absentees and brought about a slight improvement in attendance. The tracking of pupil's academic and personal development is good. This provides the school with a clear picture of the progress pupils make and helps staff set targets for moving learning forward. Teachers' marking of pupil's work is consistent and supports improvement. High quality help is provided by support staff to many pupils with learning difficulties and those with disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents are almost rapturous in their praise of the improvements made this year. Key to the effectiveness of leadership and management is the headteachers' ability to communicate a sense of ambition and drive improvement in the whole school community. With major staffing changes in the last year her absolute commitment and determination to improve the life chances of all pupils has become infectious and is now shared by staff, pupils, parents and governors. The deputy headteacher provides a calm and highly effective level of support that ensures the leadership team continually reviews the effectiveness of its strategic decisions. The special educational needs coordinator is highly effective in leading the team of staff which ensures excellent support for pupils with additional needs. The school is developing its role in the local and wider community well, but as yet international and global links are less well developed. Governance of the school is mostly good. Governors are keen to check what the school is doing more carefully in order to develop their role in acting as a critical friend. While many of the changes across the school are recent and there is scope to ensure even greater consistency, the school is well placed to make further progress.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	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**

1 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cowley Hill School, Borehamwood, WD6 5DP

Thank you very much for looking after my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed speaking to several of you and meeting you in lessons, at lunchtime, in assembly and when we spoke to the school council.

These are some of the best things we found:

- you, your families, the staff and governors are all delighted with the many changes and improvements in the school during the last year
- Mrs Willis and Miss Gamage lead your school extremely well and have helped everyone to focus on raising standards.
- you all seem to really enjoy school, and most of you behave very well and try hard with your work
- the school makes sure that if you need extra help this is provided so that all of you have equal opportunities and can make good progress
- everyone in the school community is working together to help the school keep moving forward.

Yours is now a good school. To help things to improve further we have asked that:

- planning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides more opportunities for them to improve their skills in different areas.
- staff make sure that teaching is consistently good and that all activities within a lesson are carefully planned to move your learning forward.

To help your school to improve even further please remember to come to school regularly and encourage your parents and the school to help you make healthy choices in what you eat.

Yours faithfully

Sue Hall

Lead inspector