

Overdale Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120022
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	327175
Inspection date	27 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Thomson
Headteacher	Gwyneth Cubison
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
School address	Eastcourt Road Knighton Leicester LE2 3YA
Telephone number	01162 883736
Fax number	01162 883800

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress made by less able pupils, especially in mathematics
- standards and progress in science
- enrichment of the curriculum, pupils' enjoyment and how well they take responsibility
- the impact of leadership on school improvement, including the part played by subject leaders and governors in school evaluation.

Evidence was gathered from observations of pupils at work and play, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of documentation and an analysis of parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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 junior school serves a diverse community. About half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although many of these pupils are learning English as an additional language, few are in the early stages of doing so. The main home languages for these pupils are Gujarati, Panjabi, Urdu and Shona. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties.

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 where pupils flourish both socially and academically. The school has made good progress since the last inspection under the good leadership and management of senior leaders who have set a clear direction for improvement. Consequently, standards have risen for the last three years and from above average starting points they now rise to well above average levels by the end of Year 6. There are no significant differences between the progress of different groups of pupils. The small number of pupils who are in the early stages of learning English are supported well and they make good progress.

Pupils are taught well and their achievement is good, although progress is not yet even from subject to subject. Teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to introduce new skills, and pupils' behaviour is managed effectively. Teachers get on well with their pupils and there is a good pace to learning in most lessons. Pupils make the best progress in English and science. In science lessons, teachers plan activities that build well on pupils' curiosity and they encourage them to think like scientists. For example, in Year 4, pupils enthusiastically suggested scientific ways in which they could test the viscosity of a liquid. In English, teachers plan work that effectively meets differing needs and provides good challenge for all pupils. Pupils who are struggling with their work, including the less able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given good support both in and out of lessons and this means that they make good progress in improving their literacy skills.

The school has rightly identified that pupils make slightly slower progress in mathematics than in English and science. Although progress in mathematics picks up significantly in Year 6, where pupils are grouped by ability for lessons, in the rest of the school, teaching is not always pitched at the right level for all pupils, especially lower and middle attaining pupils. The school has just started to tackle this by giving more support to pupils in small groups outside lessons but it is too early for the impact of this to be seen in consistently improved progress. More able pupils are generally challenged well in numeracy lessons, especially in Year 6 where they are taught as a discrete group.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good, as is the quality of care, guidance and support. There are good links with outside agencies to ensure pupils' well-being, and safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a problem, with one commenting, 'Teachers are always there if we are worried.' Throughout the school, pupils behave well and they have a good understanding of how to stay safe, for example talking confidently about dangers they need to be aware of when using the internet. Pupils participate keenly in sports and are knowledgeable about the importance of eating a balanced diet. They develop good confidence and self-esteem. This, alongside their generally good basic skills, means that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Most pupils enjoy school, although some in Year 6 rightly feel that too much time is spent revising for tests. A few parents also expressed concern about this and the school acknowledges that next year it will have to review how it prepares pupils for end of Year 6 national tests. Throughout the school, pupils especially like the good range of clubs and other activities that enrich the already good curriculum. The newly introduced residential trip to Overstrand is greatly appreciated by older pupils who say that they 'had a great time and learnt lots'. Creativity is fostered very imaginatively through lessons and clubs. Pupils produce high quality artwork such as the superb sculpture of Medusa made by the art club. Provision for music is also

particularly strong, with a high number of pupils learning to play musical instruments or taking part in performances.

Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They are good ambassadors for the school and they are right when they say that they learn how to take responsibility. School councillors carry out their roles sensibly and this activity gives them a good involvement in decision making. 'Young leaders' are very enthusiastic about the way that they ensure that playtimes are generally calm and harmonious. Pupils organise fund-raising for charities and they learn about the importance of caring for the local environment.

The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and its contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The progress of pupils from different groups is carefully checked to ensure that all are doing as well as each other and the school works effectively to eliminate discrimination through activities such as 'Friends against Bullying'. Pupils learn to respect each other's beliefs and their cultural awareness is satisfactory. However, their knowledge of life beyond Overdale is relatively limited. This is because pupils have too few opportunities to mix with children from cultural, religious or social backgrounds that are different from their own. In addition, although there are many attractive displays around school, they do not reflect the cultural diversity of the school and, despite the best efforts of leaders, as at the time of the last inspection, minority ethnic groups are under-represented on the governing body.

The school is successful and has improved so much because leaders have created an ethos in which all pupils are valued and respected. Members of staff work together effectively and there is a shared vision for the next stage of development. Across the school, teamwork is strong and there is a clear understanding of what still needs to be done, based on good systems for checking how well the school is doing that fully involve subject leaders and governors. Senior managers make good use of information about pupils' learning to set challenging targets and to identify any who need additional support. Although this has only just started to have an impact in mathematics, the school has shown in the way that it has raised standards, especially in English and science, that it has a good capacity for further improvement.

The school works well with a range of partners. Links with local secondary schools have a good effect on learning, especially in subjects such as science, music, physical education and art where facilities and staff skills are shared. Parents make a significant contribution by supporting their children's learning at home, especially in reading, and the large majority are happy with the work of the school. One parent summed up the views of many by commenting, 'There is a happy environment, the teaching is good and the whole school is a positive and happy place.' This accurately captures the essence of this successful school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in mathematics work is always pitched at the right level for all pupils.
- Strengthen pupils' cultural awareness by developing links with schools in different locations and making more use of displays to celebrate the school's cultural diversity.

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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

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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	3
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**

28 April 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Overdale Junior School, Leicester, LE2 3YA

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and for showing me your work. You are polite and friendly. I enjoyed talking to the school councillors and I agree that Overdale is a good school that does a lot to help you do well.

Some of the things I found out about your school

- Good teaching helps you to learn well, especially in English and science.
- Your behaviour is good and you work sensibly in lessons. Pupils from different backgrounds play together happily.
- You enjoy school, although I agree with you that you spend too much time revising for tests in Year 6. The school has said that it is going to change this next year.
- Adults make learning exciting by planning interesting activities and letting you take part in a good number of clubs and visits.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. It is great that the environmental group is helping you to learn about taking care of the world for the next generation.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring. They give you good guidance to help you understand how to improve and most of you can talk about your targets.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are leading the school well and are working hard to make it even better.
- Nearly all of your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.

What I have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that in mathematics lessons work is always pitched at the right level so that it is not too hard or too easy for some of you.
- Strengthen your cultural awareness by giving you more opportunities to work with children from schools in different locations, and by making better use of displays to celebrate the many cultures that can be found in school.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard. I thoroughly enjoyed watching you learn and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector