

The Avenue Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121871
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327588
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	174
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	Mark Ryan
Headteacher	G M Thomas-Hancock
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Avenue Wellingborough NN8 4ET
Telephone number	01933 276366
Fax number	01933 224414

Age group	5–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Avenue is a two-form entry infant school situated in the centre of Wellingborough. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. A few pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average but the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. A minority of children have not experienced pre-school education before they start in Reception. The school has achieved the Healthy School award. There is an after-school club on the school site that is not managed by the governing body. This is inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Overall effectiveness is outstanding. The school ethos is extremely warm and supportive. Pupils enjoy and blossom in the positive learning environment and consequently they receive an outstanding education. They learn to become part of, and contribute to, the school and wider community. The majority of parents are strongly supportive, appreciative and positive about the school, describing it as 'An exceptional school superbly led by the headteacher and all the teachers. Children are challenged and encouraged to reach their full potential. They are happy to go to school and enthusiastic about the school day when they come home.'

The success of the school is due to the effectiveness of the headteacher, governors and senior management team who provide extremely clear educational direction. They lead the school exceptionally well and share the headteacher's passion for continual improvement, constantly reviewing and evaluating their work. This high quality is reflected in the very strong commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the best possible education. The school's excellent organisation, strong, shared vision, and impressive track record of improvement demonstrate its outstanding capacity to continue moving forward.

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children make excellent progress from very low starting points because the quality of teaching is outstanding. Extremely well planned activities and constant challenge ensure Reception children make impressive gains in all aspects of their learning.

Pupils skills and knowledge is well below the level expected when start in the Reception class however, because the quality of teaching is outstanding, Year 1 and 2 pupils make excellent progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are average, although not enough pupils reach the higher levels. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress as their peers. Excellent support for pupils who speak English as an additional language ensures they make impressive gains in their learning. Preparation for pupils' future economic well-being is excellent. Pupils develop superb social skills and personal qualities and they make excellent progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is good. Pupils are extremely well cared for and there is an excellent focus on valuing and supporting all pupils. Opportunities for learning after school are less well developed. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures meet current statutory requirements.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good with outstanding features reflecting top quality care, guidance and support. They know how to behave well, stay safe and healthy. Pupils enjoy the healthy snacks and activity sessions such as the 'school bounce'. Attendance rates are broadly average. Pupils learn to make an excellent contribution to their school and local communities. Their contribution to national and global communities is less well developed because planning and evaluation of community cohesion does not yet quite match the excellent standards of other aspects of provision. The school is working to extend the links it has with people in other parts of the country and overseas.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Most children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge well below those normally expected, especially in social skills,

language and literacy. They make excellent progress in all areas of learning, although they are slightly below the expected level when they enter Year 1. High expectations and a well-planned curriculum that is extremely well matched to the children's needs are contributing to the remarkable progress they make in all areas of learning. Activities are fun and challenging, and this contributes to the significant gains. Questions are used very effectively to extend learning, which helps to give children confidence and plenty of opportunity to respond and communicate with others. Problem solving tasks skilfully challenge children. Visits are used extremely well, for example children wrote a thank you letter to the zookeeper after a visit to the zoo. Children were keen to draw, paint and share information about their favourite animals explaining why they liked them best. More able children found further information in books about animals such as giraffes, discovering they have long necks so that they can eat the leaves from tall trees. Personal aspects of care are extremely strong and this contributes to children's very positive start to their education. Relationships are excellent and consequently children make outstanding progress in their personal development. Excellent leadership and management ensure children make a terrific start to their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the number of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels by raising the level of challenge for more able pupils.
- Improve the planning and evaluation of community cohesion so that it matches the same high standards as other aspects of provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school successfully enables all groups of pupils to show excellent achievement from their start in Reception. Rigorous assessment and tracking, swiftly followed by successful intervention at all levels, contributes to this outstanding achievement. Therefore, standards in National Curriculum assessments in 2008 were average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Effective monitoring promptly identifies pupils who need extra support or additional challenge. Their learning is very carefully assessed and managed, and highly effective support strategies are in place for them. As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress as their peers. A focus on improving writing has been successful and current results and standards show marked improvement in writing throughout the school, although the school knows there is a need to raise the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They make excellent gains in their spiritual, moral and social development and good gains in their cultural development. Their obvious enjoyment of lessons has a major influence on their learning. Pupils appreciate the achievement of other pupils; work well with each other and show care and consideration. Outstanding relationships with adults and strong guidance promote excellent awareness of safety. Pupils are aware of dangers and risks outside school, especially in relation to road safety. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour. Pupils' understanding of the community and sense of responsibility are developed extremely well through their contribution to the school council. They show high levels of responsibility as

playground buddies and monitors. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and the school is working hard to improve and reward better attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit from excellent teaching as they progress through the school. High quality support staff support teachers very effectively and this contributes to the excellent learning. Skilfully targeted support is also making a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Planning is excellent and is increasingly taking account of pupils' different abilities, especially for the more able. All teachers show enthusiasm for learning and have high expectations. As a result, pupils enjoy the lessons and are challenged to produce their very best work. Year 2 pupils learnt successfully how to prepare comments for a debate about moving to the junior school. Teachers use questions and 'talking partners' extremely well, which ensures pupils participate fully in their learning. The staff know and track pupils' progress extremely well and the system used to record progress is detailed and easily evaluated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is extremely well matched to the needs of all pupils. It successfully provides pupils with interesting and exciting opportunities and ensures they make excellent progress in all areas of learning. The use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects is very successful. The programme of personal, social and health education has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development, raising their self-esteem and contributing to their enjoyment of learning. Skills are identified clearly and developed well in topic-based work. The school's work is enhanced by the many visitors and visits which stimulate the pupils to very effective learning. Pupils wrote extensive accounts after a visit from the Mayor. Opportunities for pupils to attend extra-curricular clubs after school and during lunchtimes are less well developed than in many infant schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The extremely caring ethos results in very happy pupils who thoroughly enjoy their school life. The school works extremely well with parents and support agencies where necessary. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support and consequently, pupils get the best out of their learning and ensure they achieve as well as the others. The support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is superb, resulting in excellent progress. Attendance is monitored rigorously and good links established with parents reminding them of the importance of regular and prompt attendance. The school's own tracking and assessment procedures are excellent. High quality academic guidance ensures pupils know what to do to improve their work. The clear guidance given by staff during lessons, with oral and written comments, provides excellent feedback to pupils to help them improve. Transition arrangements for children entering and moving on to the junior school are excellent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's superb leadership is extremely well underpinned by experienced, hardworking and dedicated senior managers and staff. They are all passionate about providing the best possible education for all children in their care. This has contributed to the school's continual improvement. The success of the team is demonstrated by the exceptional achievement of pupils throughout the school and their excellent attitudes and behaviour. Challenging, but achievable, targets are set in all years, and teachers, teaching assistants and pupils alike thrive on their leaders' encouragement. Subject leaders have clear roles and they provide a strong steer to improve standards and achievement. The school knows its strengths and staff work hard to eliminate any identified weakness.

Improved use of assessment procedures, progress tracking and target setting is leading to a significant rise in standards. A stronger focus on writing is also leading to improvements in the quality of pupils' writing but the school has not yet ensured that every more able pupil reaches the higher levels. School leaders are working to make sure children's understanding of communities in other parts of Britain and overseas matches their outstanding achievement in other work. The governors are rigorously challenging, supportive and involved, and make an excellent contribution to the management of the school.

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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?	1
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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?	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	1
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**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Avenue Infant School, Wellingborough NN8 4ET

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We will remember how beautifully you all performed your early morning bounce and silent movements in assembly. You and your parents told us that The Avenue is an excellent school and we agree with you.

These are the things we found that your school does well.

- You get off to an excellent start in Reception and continue to make superb progress through the school. As a result of excellent teaching, you reach average standards by the end of Year 2.
- You all enjoy learning immensely and your attendance continues to improve well.
- You behave well and are extremely sensible and know how to keep safe.
- You greatly enjoy and benefit from the many visits, visitors and fun activities such as The Wizard of Oz.
- Your school cares for you extremely well and teaches you a lot about how to be healthy and look after others.
- Your school council is well organised and is working very well with your teachers to make sure your school continues to improve.
- Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors lead the school exceptionally well and all the staff work effectively together to make sure that the school is an exciting fun place to learn. What we have asked your school to do now.
- Challenge those who find the work easy to reach higher levels.
- Make sure you have more visits from people who live in different parts of Britain and in other countries.

You can help by continuing to work really hard. Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector