

Phoenix Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122532
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327751
Inspection date	13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	175
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	68
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Leighton
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Sprengel
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Phoenix Avenue Gedling Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG4 4EL
Telephone number	0115 9539927
Fax number	0115 9871866

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the school is coping with changes in governance and staffing
- whether children continue to achieve well
- how the school is improving attendance
- how much progress the school has made in using information and communication technology in lessons and in setting children targets for improvement.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and children's work, scrutinising school documentation, parents' questionnaire responses, and records of children's achievement and progress. Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, governors and with children.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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 the report.

Description of the school

Phoenix Infant and Nursery School is smaller than average. The school serves Gedling and the surrounding area. The great majority of children are from White British backgrounds and virtually all speak English as their first language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The proportion of children known to qualify for a free school meal is broadly average. Since the last inspection, there have been changes of staff and governors. Phoenix has the Activemark, Artsmark Gold, and Healthy Schools Gold awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Phoenix Infant and Nursery School provides a good education for children. The outstanding care and support they receive leads to children's excellent personal development. Children enjoy school life very much and their responses to school activities are excellent. The partnership with parents is exceptionally strong. All questionnaires returned were entirely positive. Typical of parents' responses was, 'Phoenix is a lovely friendly school. I'm so pleased I chose this school for my children to go to'. Parents talked of how well their children are known to staff, how well they are guided and supported and of their good progress. The inspection confirms parents' positive views.

Children's moral and social awareness is exceptional. The school is a harmonious community. Children have duties that they carry out enthusiastically, such as making sure that everyone at the 'friendship stop' has someone to play with. Children explain with ease about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Parents confirm that the school has an important role in the wider community, such as providing first aid courses for them. The curriculum is varied and good. Children gain a good awareness about life in West Africa when they compare life in England and Ghana but are less aware of different cultures closer to home. Following its community cohesion audit the school is planning stronger links with a school in a different area of Nottingham. Safeguarding arrangements are a high priority and meet requirements.

In spite of the many changes of staff, children continue to be well prepared for their next school. Children make good progress, which is the result of well-planned, consistently good teaching and children's willingness to try hard. Teachers manage their classes very well and involve children in regular discussions and writing activities to develop their thinking skills. A key school priority is to continue the focus on speaking and listening activities so that children's imaginations are also stimulated further. This is an exceptionally well thought out area for development that reflects the headteacher's vision for raising standards and the whole staff's comprehensive understanding of children's needs.

In the end of Year 2 assessments, children's standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been very high. This year, results are likely to be average although records of children's progress since they began school show that they have made good progress from their starting points. Children also make good progress in their understanding within subjects. In Year 1, children made interesting suggestions about what motivated Jack to behave as he did as they explored the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. In Year 2 children showed that they have an excellent understanding of keeping safe at home. Their posters about the dangers of electricity are most informative.

Phoenix is an inclusive school. High interest reading resources boost boys' interest in reading. Excellent displays of children's work show them how much their efforts are valued. Children make good progress because the teaching matches work closely to their needs and interests. Those who find learning difficult also make good progress. Adults ensure that they have work that they can do, but that also challenges them. Children contribute to their excellent individual education plans and targets are written in child-friendly language. Children have extra support in lessons, individually or in small groups, to help them learn faster. The success of the teaching means that many children who find learning difficult reach the expected national standards by the end of Year 2.

Attendance has improved considerably and is above average. The staff have worked effectively to reduce the number of absentees and the frequency of persistent absence. There has been good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology. Teachers use interactive whiteboards in each classroom to make lessons more interesting. Laptop computers are in regular use in lessons, such as to help children practise subtraction in mathematics lessons. Teachers mark children's work thoroughly. They set children goals for improvement based on what they have produced. This effective system focuses individuals on what they most need to improve.

The headteacher and senior staff lead the school well. Teamwork is a strong feature. There is an exceptionally clear, shared vision for the future of the school and a capacity on the part of the leadership and staff to move forward together. The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation is accurate. Staff are always looking to evaluate the impacts of changes and how effective they are. The governing body has undergone considerable changes. Their 'critical friendship' role is an area for development. The governing body does not make enough checks on the school's progress, such as in the area of community cohesion. Governors have been successful in recruiting a team of staff who share common goals. Based on the staff's impact on the school so far and governors' satisfactory and growing influence on the school, it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets the needs of the children well and provides a good start to their school years. Many children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are below the expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Children thrive in a stimulating and safe learning environment throughout the key stage, in which their welfare is paramount. As one parent wrote, 'My child loves every minute in the Nursery and is flourishing in this happy school'. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and, by the time they enter Year 1, most children have achieved them and a few exceed them.

Adults deftly interact with children in their play, developing their language and helping them to extend their thinking and ideas. In one Reception class, children have made an excellent audiovisual presentation that features 'Grommet' the dog exploring all parts of the school. Each child had the opportunity to locate Grommet and say where he was. Children prepared carefully, wrote down their ideas and drew a picture of the scene they wanted.

Children's behaviour is excellent and they are responsive, friendly and feel able to approach adults, knowing that they will receive a positive response. This is the basis of children's excellent personal, social and emotional development and a firm foundation for future learning. Leadership and management are effective and ensure that the wide range of interesting and exciting learning activities, both inside the classroom and the outdoor area, include all the required areas of learning. The good organisation of the learning environment and the assessment and tracking of children's skill development underpin their good progress. The next development is to ensure that one system for recording observations of what children know and can do across the key stage is adopted to allow easier transfer of records at the end of the year.

The curriculum is carefully planned to provide many opportunities for children to engage in imaginative and organised play. The excellent outdoor areas are another strength. They have a variety of interesting resources to support children's intellectual and physical development.

Children are strongly encouraged to be independent learners and receive skilled support from teaching assistants, who display an impressive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more opportunities for children to speak and listen, to stimulate their imaginations and so raise standards in all subjects.
- Develop the governing body's 'critical friendship' role further so that governors can keep a more accurate check on the school's progress.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	3
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	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?	1

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	1
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	3
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

14 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Phoenix Infant and Nursery School, Gedling, NG4 4EL

It was good to meet so many of you, see you at work and to listen to your views. Special thanks go to the School Council members Dr Thomas met after lunch and to those of you I joined in the dining room. Here are some of the best features of your school.

- You make a super start to school life in Nursery and Reception.
- You make good progress with your work in Years 1 and 2.
- Your headteacher, teachers and all the staff organise the school well for your benefit. Everyone has a chance to do well.
- You enjoy school very much because teachers make lessons interesting.
- You are growing up to be responsible young people.
- You work hard and behave really well.

Two things would help the school get even better.

- Teachers could give you further chances to speak and listen in lessons, to allow you to be more imaginative so that you can make your work ever more interesting.
- School governors need to keep a closer check on how well the school is doing.

You can help by continuing to behave well, coming to school regularly, working hard and showing interest in your work.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Roger Fry

Lead inspector