

Gotham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122644
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327773
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Benson
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Lymn-Brewin
Date of previous school inspection	30–31 March 2009
School address	Kegworth Road Gotham Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG11 0JS
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by an additional inspector who visited ten lessons, and held meetings with governors, the headteacher, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at school performance data, school policies, governing body minutes and 33 parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- The factors leading to achievement of pupils at Key Stage 1 appearing more rapid than at Key Stage 2, including for those capable of reaching higher levels;
- Why standards in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 are lower than in other subjects and how effective the school's strategies are to improve pupils' results;
- How effectively the headteacher and governors have managed the recent changes to ensure that the school continues to move forward.

Information about the school

Gotham Primary School, which is smaller than most, serves four rural villages and pupils from the Clifton estate. The area is one of diverse social and economic circumstances. There is no nursery class and children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception in either the September or January, prior to their fifth birthday. Their levels of knowledge and skills vary. For some year groups, standards have been below those expected. However, children entering school in most recent years have levels of skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. A lower than average percentage has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and no pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Gold award and has attained the Financial Management in Schools award. It is an extended school which works with the Harry Carlton family of schools to strengthen its provision for pupils' learning and development.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good quality education for all of its pupils. It is a busy, happy and inclusive school, strengthened by the excellent leadership of the headteacher and supportive and hard working staff and governors. The improvements made since the last inspection in, for example, the quality of pupils' writing and the good management of personnel changes, confirm the school's good capacity for continued improvement. The curriculum, which has improved significantly and is now good, provides strong evidence of the school's good systems for evaluating its work.

Good opportunities for pupils to work and play in teams and to be leaders with responsibility in school and in the community promote well their development as responsible citizens. Effective pastoral support throughout the school ensures pupils' good preparation for secondary school. The well targeted support for vulnerable pupils is successful in removing barriers to their learning. The school's programme for community cohesion has broadened pupils' outlook and appreciation of the diversity of the world and is correspondingly enriching their education.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is due to the good curriculum and effective, engaging teaching. This increasingly enables pupils to learn across subjects, both independently and cooperatively. In turn, pupils display positive attitudes to lessons, through their very sensible behaviour and good attendance. They make good progress through the school from their individual starting points. Standards vary from year to year depending on the composition of the small cohorts, and for the current Year 6 are average. While mathematics standards have risen further improvement is needed, including in mental mathematics. Provision and support for those pupils who have specific gifts and talents is at an early stage although it is well established for those who find learning difficult. A consistently effective structure to lessons and a variety of learning styles are constant strengths. Although marking of pupils' work often helps guide them to their targets, this is less so in mathematics. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who need specific help although recording of their small day-to-day progress is not consistent. Similarly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, records of children's work do not give a full picture of their

achievements. Nevertheless, assessment of pupils' learning continues to develop well, with pupils' regular involvement in evaluation of their and others' learning in place.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics further so that 90% of pupils are attaining the expected Level 4 and 38% the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in 2010 by:
 - continuing to focus on improving pupils' skills in mental mathematics
 - ensuring that marking of mathematics work informs pupils of the next steps in learning.
- Make better use of information about the levels at which pupils work by:
 - ensuring that the progress of those pupils who receive individual or group support is recorded consistently to inform future planning for their needs
 - putting procedures in place to ensure that recording of observations of children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage give a regular and comprehensive picture of their progress
 - making planning for the needs of pupils with specific gifts and talents part of regular lesson planning and pursuing wider opportunities for them within the family of schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards by the end of Year 6 are average, reflecting the good achievement of pupils of all abilities throughout the school from their starting points. Observations of lessons during the inspection show that teaching and learning are good at both key stages leading to good learning and progress for all groups of pupils. The school has reversed last year's dip in standards in mathematics but still needs to improve them further, including in mental mathematics. Writing standards have improved since the last inspection due to them being a whole school focus. Pupils who find aspects of learning difficult make good progress due to specific and appropriate support.

Pupils say they are happy at school. Their above average attendance, an improving aspect since the last inspection, supports this. They speak confidently about how to be safe and how to keep safe because lessons incorporate such topics. An excellent anti-bullying initiative by the school has empowered pupils to take care of themselves and each other. Most pupils behave very well, strengthened by their ownership of the new code of conduct and the many opportunities to develop as learners and as responsible young citizens. These opportunities include membership of the school council, which took a leading role in developing the code of conduct and has considerable responsibility. Pupils have daily opportunities to develop their social, personal and inter-personal skills through the curriculum. They are proud to be offered responsibilities in all year groups and increasingly within the local community. Together with their fund raising experiences, their developing skills in working

effectively in pairs, groups and independently, pupils are well prepared for the challenges of the next stage of their education. They know the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily and the majority act on this. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school, through the curriculum and links with the family of schools and beyond, is successfully broadening pupils' understanding of the diversity of the world in which we live and adding to their knowledge of the faith groups in our country and also, more recently, internationally.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

A careful structure to lessons ensures a range of teaching and learning styles which keep pupils interested. Teachers work hard to provide imaginative tasks which bring delight to pupils. Pupils enjoy lessons which have a brisk pace and which involve them. All lessons make the purposes of learning clear and the best ones constantly revisit them. Information and communication technology is used very well to add interest and involvement to learning. Marking of pupils' work in literacy always tells them what they have achieved and the next steps they need to take. Less advice is given in numeracy marking. Pupils are becoming more involved in the quality of their learning by assessing their own work and that of their peers. Staff generally use the information about pupils' achievements carefully in planning work. Pupils who find learning difficult help to write their own targets and their understanding and ownership of achievable goals, along with good support from teaching assistants, motivates them well. Their progress is assessed regularly to ensure they are on track. Although assessment is regular and accurate the small gains made by pupils who receive individual or group support are not recorded consistently enough.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The revised curriculum has increased the opportunities for pupils to develop new skills and to learn for themselves. From the start of the day until after lessons end pupils are purposefully occupied, in a myriad of ways. Learning across subjects is embedded in the timetable and although the major emphasis is on literacy and numeracy, timetables show a variety of skills being developed in each lesson. Daily phonics lessons through the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, offer good and sometimes outstanding provision to build up pupils' literacy skills. The curriculum offers a wide range of subjects and learning experiences, including Spanish. Regular visits and visitors and out-of-school activities demonstrate a well rounded curriculum. Provision for pupils who find learning difficult is well planned, often offering learning in small groups. That for pupils with particular gifts and talents is at the developmental stage. Good attention is given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is incorporated thoughtfully into the curriculum through Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning as well as through daily school routines.

Staff know the pupils well as individuals from the time they start, through arrangements to get to know them and their parents before they join the school. Transition procedures in Year 6 are also good and pupils state that they feel confident about moving to secondary education. The school works hard to involve parents in school life, extending invitations for them to be involved in reading days and enrichment activities. Good systems and good communication between staff mean that those pupils with worries or problems that make it difficult for them to settle to learning, are given the support they need. Sometimes it is through the school's comprehensive links with external agencies, which provide additional guidance and skills to manage particular situations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite significant recent changes in personnel, the headteacher has sustained the momentum in moving the school forward and strengthened the school through her development of senior leadership. As a result of her excellent leadership and management, clear vision and rigorous monitoring, good impact is evident in all aspects of the school's work illustrating its ambitious drive for continuous improvement. Detailed accurate pupil assessment information ensures swift identification of and support for vulnerable pupils and those who have particular learning needs. Relationships with outside agencies and the family of schools are comprehensive and close, strengthening the school's provision and giving very high quality support. Planning for community cohesion is being put into practice and has clearly been securely in place in all but name in recent years. The school does all it

can to promote inclusion in school through its uniform, ethos of equality, code of conduct, provision and good relationships with parents. Its religious, ethnic and social dimensions extend to the local community and increasingly nationally and internationally, strengthening pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and empathy. The governing body, many of whom are new, is enthusiastically developing its roles under the effective overseeing of the chair. Good systems ensure that there is rigorous oversight of safeguarding practices and all policies and procedures are compliant.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception class. They settle down quickly, helped by the school’s good links with pre-school settings and the carefully planned procedures in place when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage. This exemplifies the good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The information gained by staff about the levels of children’s development results in good planning. Regular assessments continue throughout Reception although recording of observations of children’s learning do not always contain enough detail about their progress. Good teaching is complemented by a wide range of activities, offering a good balance of teacher directed and child initiated tasks. Children know how to eat healthily, and understand the importance of keeping fit.

Children are happy in the Early Years Foundation Stage, enjoying and benefiting from the daily routines and high expectations. The arrangements where children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share classroom accommodation with Year 1 ensure they can learn from older pupils. They learn to share and cooperate sensibly and understand when other children are upset and need comfort. Staff care well for the children and daily procedures are in place to help ensure they are safe and know how to keep safe. They have the confidence to become increasingly independent in their actions and learning, thriving on the daily responsibilities with which they are

entrusted. For example, they are thrilled to take the milk round to all classes daily. The standards they reach by the end of the stage are in line with those expected for their age.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost unanimously, parents say that the school fully meets their children's needs. In particular, they believe the school is well led and managed, that their children enjoy school and that they are kept well informed of their progress. Parents also feel that the school cares very well for their children. One parent described the school as 'Nurturing and supporting their children.'

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gotham Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 33 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 80 parents and carers registered at the school. All of the questionnaires were analysed. The collated responses are as follows.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	3	1	1

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gotham Primary School, Nottingham, NG11 0JS

I was very pleased to visit your school recently to find out how you are getting on. I enjoyed watching you learning in lessons and playing during break time. Thank you for sharing your views about your school with me in our meetings. I was pleased to see some of your grandparents, who were very proud that you were showing them round school and explaining what you do there. This letter will tell you the judgements that I have made about your school.

Your school is a good school. You make good progress, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards because teaching is good and you are given interesting ways to learn. You have more opportunities to use computers, which pleases you very much. You also enjoy the after school clubs which offer you a wide range of activities.

The staff know it is very important to help you to develop essential skills for when you are older. I was delighted to see that you have lots of responsibilities to help you to do this and all of you do a brilliant job. This includes the school council whose representatives are making important improvements. The youngest children among you give out the milk very sensibly every day.

Your headteacher leads your school extremely well and all of the staff work hard to keep you safe and to make school the best that it can be. There are ways that it can be even better. Although mathematics standards have improved, they still need to rise. I have asked for targets to be set for you for 2010 and for marking in mathematics to tell you more clearly the next steps in learning. The school has good information about the levels you work at which need to be recorded more fully for those of you who have particular gifts and talents, for those who receive individual and group help with their learning and for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. I have also asked your headteacher to make sure that planning for those of you who have particular gifts and talents is in place in all lessons and that opportunities for you to develop your skills and talents further are looked for within the family of schools.

I send you my best wishes for the future.

Lynne Blakelock
Lead inspector

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