

Vernon Terrace Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121920
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	332310
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	206
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	Andrew Evans
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lapsa
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Vernon Terrace Northampton NN1 5HE
Telephone number	01604 633894
Fax number	01604 633894

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Vernon Terrace is an average sized primary school situated close to the town centre. Nearly three-quarters of the pupils are from a very wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds, with about a fifth from Eastern European countries, and a further sixth of Bangladeshi heritage. Almost two-thirds of the pupils do not have English as their home language and 31 different languages are spoken by pupils. Many join the school, in all year groups, speaking little or no English. Some of these have had no previous schooling. There is a much higher than average movement of pupils in and out of the school at times other than the normal joining or leaving stages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has a Designated Special Provision for pupils who are hearing-impaired and who have statements of special educational needs. Pupils attending the unit spend most of their time in classes with other pupils of the same age. They have specialist staff supporting them for part of their time in school. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in Nursery and Reception classes. There is a Children's Centre on site, which opened in July 2008, and is managed by a committee of governors.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It is now offering a satisfactory education for its pupils. There are a number of key reasons for the progress that has been made. The headteacher's drive and determination have been communicated very well to all staff. Leaders and managers at all levels have developed their skills considerably in the recent past and have been instrumental in driving improvements. The major aspect on which they have concentrated has been the necessary improvement of teaching and learning. Rigorous monitoring and focused support and training have resulted in teaching improving considerably. This has enabled pupils' progress to accelerate so that their achievement is now satisfactory. However, standards are still below average by the time pupils leave, particularly in mathematics, because of the high mobility and because too few pupils are reaching the higher levels. More able pupils do not always move on to more challenging work quickly enough. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved considerably recently and is now good.

All adults know the children and their circumstances very well and show exceptional levels of pastoral care. The recently started nurture group has been very effective in supporting pupils with particular emotional needs. The Children's Centre is working well with families, and with many of the children of pre-school age, this is beginning to have an impact on involving parents in their children's education. Care and support provided for those pupils with hearing impairments are particularly impressive and these pupils make good progress in their learning and development. Support for those who join late not speaking English is also very good and they are quickly enabled to take part in all activities. Good care and support result in pupils behaving well and having good attitudes to their school and their work. They enjoy school as teaching is good and lessons are usually active and interesting. Parents recognise their children's enjoyment of school, saying such things as, 'My child won't have any time off.' Pupils are very well aware of their learning targets and say that 'they help you know how good you are and how you can improve'. However, teachers do not consistently refer to these targets when marking pupils' work. A start has been made at pupils checking on their own progress, but this is not used consistently. The curriculum is satisfactory and rightly focuses on the development of basic skills.

The school is an extremely cohesive and racially harmonious community, with all equally valued, all cultures represented celebrated, and staff determined that all should achieve as well as they can. The school has worked hard to encourage the local community to become partners in education and to involve parents from all ethnic groups in their children's education. Despite this, a number still take their children off on extended trips to visit relatives and attendance is therefore well below average.

The local authority has been instrumental in aiding improvement as they have provided good support for the school over the last six months, particularly in providing funding for the school's provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Bearing in mind the considerable progress made recently and the determined aim of all leaders, staff and governors to continue the process, the school is well placed to continue on the upward slope.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teachers' clear knowledge of the needs of this age group is evident in the well planned curriculum and effective teaching. Children are therefore making good progress from levels of entry to Nursery considerably below those expected for their age. More than half of the children currently in Reception are on course to reach average standards by the time they join Year 1. This represents good achievement when considering their low starting points and the high proportion of children who enter school with a limited command of the English language.

Good provision for their welfare ensures that, from their first days, children are safe and secure. They quickly form valuable relationships and a good understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Children benefit from a wide range of interesting tasks and a good balance between activities led by an adult and those children choose for themselves. However, at times, it is not sufficiently clear what skill or knowledge is expected to be gained from some activities.

A marked feature of the good practice is the focus given to engaging children in talk to develop and extend language. Children clearly enjoy daily activities for phonics (letters and sounds) and speaking and listening. In Nursery, children took delight in forming letter shapes in a tray of foam, while those in Reception enjoyed reciting and taking turns to add and mix the ingredients of their 'silly soup'.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. Staff are working to refine recently implemented procedures to monitor and assess children's learning to further improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work closely with parents to improve rates of attendance.
- Increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that more able pupils do more challenging work throughout lessons.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that it relates clearly to pupils' targets and involves pupils more in the process of checking on their own progress.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' progress has accelerated substantially over the last year and pupils are now back on track and their achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average, particularly in mathematics, as too few are reaching the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress as they receive very good support and clear targets for their improvement. This is particularly the case for those pupils with a hearing impairment, who are provided for very well. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress in their language development and are therefore able to make the same progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school, behave well and have good attitudes to learning. However, despite concerted efforts by the school, attendance rates, although improving, are still well below average. Such absences, which are due largely to parents taking children on extended holidays, have a detrimental impact on pupils' learning.

Pupils say bullying is rare and are confident that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Good gains in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development result in racial harmony, enable learners to appreciate the needs of others, and to show care and consideration for one another. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school and local communities. They enjoy taking responsibility, whether undertaking monitor duties acting as 'Junior Road Safety Officers' or when helping younger children in school. The school council makes a satisfactory contribution to school life and, along with circle time, ensures pupils' views are voiced. Raising funds for a range of charities gives pupils an understanding of those less fortunate. As one pupil stated, 'It helps us to be grateful for what we have.' Such activities, together with pupils' achievement in basic skills, result in satisfactory preparation for their next stage of education and the world of work. Work relating to gaining Healthy School status helps pupils to develop a sound understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are exemplified by good relationships and an interesting range of planned activities, which result in pupils being keen to learn. Interactive whiteboards are used well as a stimulus for learning. For instance, in a Year 3 science lesson, a digital microscope was linked to the whiteboard to examine types of paper that pupils were going to test for absorbency. Pupils were fascinated as the magnification was turned up to 60 times. Teaching assistants are skilful and are used well. They play a key role in aiding pupils' learning, particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language. Although challenging activities are provided for the more able in most lessons, pupils often do not move on to these activities quickly enough. In their marking of work, teachers do not make enough reference to pupils' targets or monitor how well they are being met.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

An increased focus given to reading, writing and number skills has led to pupils' improving achievement. Provision is enhanced by a satisfactory range of visits, visitors and out-of-class activities that include 'street dance' and 'rock school'. Although in most instances the planned curriculum meets the needs of learners, tasks do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils. Pupils commented that at times they found work too easy. Good provision is made for pupils who find learning difficult and pupils identified as gifted and talented have recently been identified and provision is beginning to be made for them.

A key factor in improved standards in writing is the opportunities for pupils to practise their extended writing in other subjects. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably since the last inspection and ICT is now being used increasingly

as a tool to support learning. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, supported by residential trips, is an integral factor in the good relationships developed. The school is not yet teaching a modern foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school looks after its pupils exceptionally well. Pupils feel safe, well known by adults in school, and are confident that teachers will respond quickly to any problems. Child protection and other arrangements to safeguard learners, such as risk assessments and vetting of staff, are robust. Effective induction procedures help pupils settle into school whenever they start and help those in Year 6 prepare well for their next stage of education. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, together with the many at early stages of learning English, are given effective support that results in these pupils making good progress. Good links are maintained with a wide range of agencies and services to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils.

Academic guidance is good. Effective use is made of information from assessments to track pupils' progress and to help plan future learning. Pupils know and value having targets for learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The major factor in the school's turnaround has been the drive and very clear direction provided by the headteacher. Her enthusiasm has been infectious and there is a corporate desire to provide the best for all the pupils. Systems for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's performance are thorough and involve all staff and governors. They have built a very accurate picture of successes and what still remains to be done, and thorough plans have been made for further improvements. Middle managers are playing a leading role in driving improvement, particularly in the key areas of raising standards in English and mathematics. Governance has improved considerably recently and governors are now well aware of their responsibilities and challenge the school well. Challenging targets have been set for pupils' future achievement and especially for the quality of teaching expected. The school is well aware of the nature of the local community and has worked hard to incorporate all aspects of the community to their and the school's benefit.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
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	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**

5 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vernon Terrace Primary School, Northampton NN1 5HE

Thank you so much for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. You will be delighted to learn that your school is no longer in special measures as it is now giving you a satisfactory education. I have been really impressed with how much things have improved over the last year, since I first visited.

- These are some of the things we found out about your school.
- Your progress is getting better so that most of you are now working at the levels that you should be.
- This is because teaching has improved a lot and your lessons are good.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a good start.
- You behave well, clearly enjoy school and you all get on very well together.
- All adults look after you extremely well and you told us you feel safe at school. In particular they make sure that all the different races and cultures are helped to feel very much part of the school.
- The staff that work in the sunshine room and the rainbow room are helping those of you who go to those rooms very well.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have good plans to improve your school.
- There are three things we have asked your school to work at improving.
- Some of you do not attend school regularly enough so you are not learning as well as you should be. We have asked your school to work with your parents to help you to be at school more often.
- Some of you told us that you sometimes find your work too easy and we have asked your school to make sure that you always get sufficiently difficult work.
- You told us that you like your targets as they help you to improve your work, but your teachers do not always refer to your targets when they mark your work and they do not always give you opportunities to check on how well you are doing.

I know you will do your best to help your headteacher and teachers by continuing to work hard and try your best.

Best wishes Yours faithfully

John D Eadie Lead Inspector