

Grindon Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108766
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	337145
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Lee Wyatt
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Adamson
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by eight teachers. The inspectors observed as many of the school's other activities as possible and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They analysed the school's documentation, progress data, welfare arrangements and the 93 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, as well as those from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- standards of writing throughout the school, especially among boys
- the extent to which pupils are aware of the world beyond school, including its multicultural dimension
- the consistency of teaching and learning, and the standards of pupils' behaviour in lessons
- the enrichment of the curriculum in lessons and its influence on pupils' learning
- the quality and effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation, especially in linking provision to outcomes.

Information about the school

This is a large infant school in an urban setting. Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds and the population of pupils is fairly stable. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Parents and carers think well of the school and pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, especially when the topics are interesting and involve hands-on activities. The formal systems of care are secure so pupils feel safe in school. In addition, pupils are increasingly adopting a healthy lifestyle and enjoy exercise in activities such as dancing. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Staff do not all have a consistent approach to managing behaviour so, sometimes, pupils are disrespectful and are not always attentive in class. Attendance is a recent issue. It dropped last year and is currently low; the school is working to hard to improve this but has yet to succeed.

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Standards are similar in all subjects, including writing, and while there are some differences between the achievements of some groups, such as boys and girls, the school is adopting an appropriate approach to overcome them. Teaching is satisfactory with some that is good. Lessons are clearly focused on key skills and have a positive working environment. However, teachers do not use assessment skilfully enough to match work closely to pupils' abilities and needs. Although staff are supportive, pupils do not receive consistently effective guidance, including marking and its follow-up. The curriculum is suitably broad but not diverse and stimulating enough to heighten pupils' interest and raise standards. There are too few opportunities to make pupils sufficiently aware of the wider world and its multicultural dimension.

Although the school is maintaining an acceptable momentum in its development, it is 'not firing on all cylinders'. Senior leaders have good ideas to improve the school and they have done well, for example, to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the pace of change is steady at best, not helped by some instability in staffing. A lack of cohesion among senior leaders is diluting the impact of the school's improvement plans; these are pertinent but lack detail and are not monitored with sufficient rigour. The leadership team is not sharply focused and decisive enough to motivate staff fully. Development of staff is piecemeal and too dependent on individual requests rather than on whole-school needs. As a result, the morale of staff is waning. Governors are supportive and well intentioned, but they lack experience in their role and are not vigilant and proactive enough in resolving problems that arise. Nevertheless, the leadership team is sustaining adequate provision and outcomes, and has improved some aspects, such as the accommodation. Therefore, the school has sufficient capacity to sustain improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring greater clarity, decisiveness and speed in addressing any perceived weaknesses in the school
 - improving the professional development of staff so that they feel more valued and take a more proactive role in the school's development
 - ensuring that the governing body is rigorous in holding the school to account for its actions.
- Improve standards across the school by:
 - ensuring that pupils' work is consistently challenging for their capabilities
 - providing stimulating and diverse topics in lessons to boost basic skills and pupils' breadth of experience
 - providing consistently clear and helpful advice to pupils in improving their work and checking that any advice has been taken
- Improve pupils' personal development by:
 - ensuring that their behaviour is consistently well managed
 - devising new and effective ways to improve the levels of attendance
 - developing more quickly their knowledge of the world beyond school and its multicultural nature.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

For the most part, pupils enjoy school. They usually listen well in lessons because they want to learn new things. They are animated and responsive when involved in practical activities, such as investigations in science, and show good concentration at such times. They readily lose interest, though, when the subject matter is somewhat dull or when the work is not at the right level. Their achievement through Years 1 and 2 is currently satisfactory. Standards have tended to be broadly average by the end of Year 2 in recent years but have been declining steadily. Progress data and inspection evidence suggest that standards in the current Year 2 are starting to fall below average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve on a par with other pupils. Any disparities between other groups of pupils are slowly closing.

Pupils' liveliness in the playgrounds demonstrates their keenness to exercise. They appreciate that physical activity strengthens their bodies and know the value of healthy food, such as the playtime snacks. They generally get on well together and are sensible around school. They do not always behave well because rules are applied inconsistently by staff. Through lessons and themed activities, pupils have a reasonable perception of

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the world beyond the school for their age. However, teachers do not provide enough scope for pupils to interact with the broader community, to be aware of cultural differences or to reflect on their experiences and those of others. Despite low attendance, pupil's knowledge of basic skills and generally positive attitudes to learning, ensures they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning seen during the inspection were essentially satisfactory, and this was reflected in pupils' work and progress data. Some teaching is good. Teachers want pupils to succeed and are encouraging and supportive; pupils clearly respond to this. Teachers set out new learning well and structure lessons carefully so that pupils learn through discussion and group work. However, lesson planning lacks detail, especially for the different ability groups, so not all pupils are properly challenged and progress at an appropriate speed. Teachers tend to accept mediocre work by pupils, as seen in the scrappy presentation in many books. Marking is not insistent enough on quality and teachers do not follow up comments sufficiently to ensure that pupils fully understand

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

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and act upon them.

The curriculum has the right kind of balance and focus on key skills. There is an understandable emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but teachers have yet to adopt a flexible and creative approach to teaching these subjects. Hence these skills are often taught in isolation and do not always make work relevant for pupils. Better provision exists for other subjects where the subject matter is more diverse and gives pupils a deeper knowledge. In a Year 1 science lesson, for example, pupils were happily sorting items such as wooden egg cups and hurricane lamps, according to their materials. A good range of clubs, visits and visitors helps to broaden pupils' horizons.

The formal systems of care for pupils are secure. Staff certainly care for pupils, especially the more vulnerable pupils who benefit from sensitive guidance and the skills of external agencies. Staff are good at looking after pupils' bumps and grazes from the playground, although the school has been slow in ensuring that staff have skills in paediatric first aid. Senior leaders have not ensured that all staff have the same approach to managing behaviour. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, especially through the involvement of families, but its work has yet to prove successful.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Overall, senior staff provide sufficient leadership for the school to make steady progress. They share many good ideas to boost standards, yet the pace of change is hampered by some lack of direction and a clear vision shared by all staff. There are good plans to establish a more creative curriculum and to promote community cohesion, for example, but these are taking a long time to come to fruition. Some staffing problems have also interrupted the flow of change. The governing body, although well meaning, does not monitor the school with enough rigour nor act decisively to help it deal with difficult issues. However, it does ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that safeguarding procedures are good.

The school has a reasonably accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses, yet it does not routinely equate provision with the outcomes for pupils. More importantly, it has not fully appreciated the adverse impact of the morale of staff on teaching, in particular, or taken firm action to improve the situation. The school works hard to treat all pupils equally and minimise any discrimination. Nevertheless, differences in achievement between different groups of pupils exist to some extent because training

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for staff has not focused sufficiently on the varying needs of pupils.

The school has done well to reach out to families, by offering them parenting courses and support for helping their children at home. Its overtures have been partially successful in raising the awareness of parents and carers, although few have responded to take up the courses. Close links with external agencies are good at helping vulnerable pupils. They are less beneficial for the well-being of all pupils and their learning, although the impact is satisfactory.

There is a sensible action plan to promote all aspects of community for pupils. These aspects include further involvement in the local community and more frequent opportunities for pupils to appreciate the world beyond their locality. The school has work to do to ensure a happy, harmonious staff community in school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

In many ways the provision in the Nursery and Reception classes mirrors the provision in the rest of the school in that teaching, the curriculum and resources are broadly satisfactory. However, this masks recent improvement in provision that has started to raise standards by the end of the Reception Year. In 2009 children attained levels that were close to those expected of five-year-olds. The current picture of below age-related expectations is more typical and represents satisfactory achievement in view of the starting points of children.

Children have an appropriate range of activities to explore, with a sufficient focus on basic skills, although outdoor learning is not freely available. Some activities, such as

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exploring dental hygiene with a special mirror and giant mouth, are stimulating but not all are so motivating. Teachers do not expect enough of all children; for example, they sometimes give them too much free rein and do not always intervene quickly to help them maximise their potential. Behaviour is satisfactory; children learn valuable social skills when interacting with others.

Staff take good care of the children, but the school has not ensured that staff have the most relevant first-aid training for children of this age. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has done well to instigate a positive change in provision and outcomes but recognises that there is still more to do.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Just over one third of parents and careers returned completed questionnaires. Most expressed positive views about the school. A few parents and carers had some concerns, especially about the leadership and management of the school and the management of pupils' behaviour. The inspectors understand the reasons for these concerns and agree with these parents and carers. Overall, though, parents and carers are right to have a positive opinion of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grindon Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	69	26	28	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	61	36	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	62	30	32	3	3	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	57	34	37	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	55	59	33	35	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	53	41	44	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	53	40	43	2	2	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	43	46	40	43	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	54	37	40	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	42	44	47	6	6	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	45	44	47	3	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	44	47	39	42	5	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	57	36	39	2	2	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grindon Infant School, Sunderland, SR4 9QN

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of the school. The other inspectors and I enjoyed talking to you, watching you at work and listening to your thoughts. All this helped us to get to know your school well.

We judge that your school gives you a satisfactory education. We know you enjoy learning and work hard when lessons are exciting. It is good that you are becoming better at eating healthily and exercising more. You not only are safe in school but also look after one another well. Your behaviour is mostly fine but sometimes you misbehave, particularly when lessons are not interesting. We have asked the school to improve this and also to give you more chance to learn more about the big, wide world outside school and the different cultures that abound. Your attendance used to be average but has started to slip. You know that it is very important to be at school as much as possible to make sure you do well in your work.

We know teachers want you to do well and encourage you to try hard. Some lessons are fun and challenging for you, but not all are. We have asked the school to make sure that as many lessons as possible are exciting and right for your abilities. We know that adults help you in lessons to understand new things. We want them to be clearer about how you can improve your work and then check that you do it.

The staff have good ideas to make the school better. They have already improved the learning activities in the Nursery and Reception classes, for example. We know that staff would like to see clearer direction and want to work together to make improvements. We too would like to see this as soon as possible. Everyone has a part to play to improve the school, including you.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Andrew Scott

Lead inspector

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