

Catherine Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120002
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	339576
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Allbut
Headteacher	Mrs Nirmal Basson
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning, including visits to 30 lessons, during which 20 members of staff, including teachers and support staff, were seen. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its monitoring and assessment records, safeguarding documents and those relating to their health, safety and attendance, 121 questionnaires returned by parents and 18 returned by staff.

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

- the school's evidence to support their view that pupils make good progress from their starting points and reach above average standards
- what accounts for pupils' potentially slower progress in mathematics, and the extent to which more able pupils are now suitably challenged
- the extent to which support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress
- how effectively leaders, including governors, use the outcomes of their monitoring to improve standards and quality.

Information about the school

Almost all of the pupils at this large infant school are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The large majority are from families with Indian heritage and the next largest group is those from Black African backgrounds. The proportion from families whose home language is not English is much higher than usual. Twenty-three languages are represented, with the majority speaking Gujarati. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school for either morning or afternoon sessions in the Nursery (FS1). Amongst its national awards, the school has Investors in People and Healthy Schools awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Catherine Infant School provides a good education for its pupils. The school places a high priority on ensuring that all pupils, and their families, are fully included and able to make the best of the opportunities presented to them. As a result, pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well and make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are extremely positive and pupils show an exceptionally mature respect for each other's similarities and differences. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, behave well and feel very safe in the school's highly inclusive and cohesive community. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school's work, one commenting, 'The school is very well run and managed by the head and all the staff. They are all polite, approachable and friendly. They involve parents as much as they can. I am happy to send my children to this school.'

When children first start school, their attainment covers a broad range but, overall, it is well below that typically found. In addition, most children joining the Nursery have very little experience of English. A combination of good teaching, care and support enables pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress and, by the end of Year 2, levels of attainment are broadly average in reading and writing. This is the result of concerted and successful efforts to improve provision in these areas. Pupils' progress is monitored closely, so that work is invariably well matched to their differing needs and extra support, sometimes one-to-one, is directed where it is most needed. As a result, pupils often make very brisk progress, particularly in reading. Attainment is lower in mathematics and, this year, the school has introduced a range of strategies to raise standards. For example, planning has been revised and pupils are grouped according to their ability for mathematics lessons. In the main, this is helping teachers to match work to pupils' needs, but many groups still contain a wide range of competence and, occasionally, the work is too hard or too easy for some pupils. Nevertheless, the school's assessment records and pupils' work in their books and lessons show that their progress is beginning to accelerate, although it is still too soon for many of the initiatives to achieve their full benefit. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and, in English, give pupils clear information about how well they have done and how they can improve. This is not consistently the case in mathematics.

Under the very capable leadership of the headteacher, there is a strong, shared commitment to providing the very best for pupils. Senior staff and governors have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. They keep a close check on pupils' learning and set ambitious targets for improvement. Their success in raising attainment in literacy and promoting outstanding spiritual, moral, social and

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cultural development show that they are well placed to sustain further improvement. The school works closely with parents and actively seeks, and acts upon, their views. Most parents are very supportive, although a number take their children out of school for extended family visits abroad. As a result, attendance levels are low.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - ensuring a more consistent match of work to pupils' capabilities
 - providing pupils with sharper feedback about the next steps in their learning.
- Work with parents to raise attendance levels.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well and enjoy school very much. National assessment results for pupils in Year 2 show that pupils' attainment in reading and writing has risen steadily, although there was an expected dip in 2009, due to the lower starting points of that cohort. Results in mathematics have been below average in recent years. The school is working well to close the gap in pupils' performance in English and mathematics, and the progress of current pupils is accelerating. Those in Year 2 are on track to reach higher levels of attainment than those seen in recent years, although staff recognise that there is still more to do.

Pupils make good progress in lessons because they are well taught and are eager to learn. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups of pupils. Those who are new to learning English are very well supported. They soon gain confidence and are able to make similar progress to their classmates. Well structured, regular phonic sessions enable pupils of all abilities to make good progress in their knowledge of letter sounds and how words are formed. This has a positive impact on their reading, where some pupils make very rapid progress, and writing. Pupils' progress in mathematics is also accelerating, but their learning sometimes slows when the work is not pitched with sufficient precision to meet their particular needs.

Pupils' good progress in developing their basic skills means that they are increasingly well prepared for their future lives, although this is limited when pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school's very positive and supportive ethos helps to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and pupils respond exceptionally well. They listen very respectfully when others speak and have a thirst for finding out about the world around them. They work and play very well together, and are very receptive to the excellent role models set by adults. Most pupils behave well, many impeccably, although a few become restless when they find the work too hard or too easy. Pupils are keen to take on extra responsibilities, for example by acting as 'playground pals' or joining the school council. They are active in local events and performances and, further afield, they are involved in conservation work and fund raising. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives, and this is

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reflected in the Healthy Schools award.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils benefit from consistently good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching. Teachers and support staff work very well together, which makes a strong contribution to pupils from homes whose first language is not English and to those who find learning difficult. Work to improve the teaching of reading and writing has proved to be particularly successful and is directly responsible for the rising standards. In all subjects, lessons are invariably calm and orderly. Teachers plan carefully, taking account of pupils' prior understanding, although this is not always sharp enough in mathematics groups. They ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and help pupils to reflect on their understanding at the end of lessons. Teachers question well and use pupils' responses to check on their understanding. Pupils are praised well for their efforts and misconceptions are dealt with very sensitively. They respond very positively to this approach and, in the main, concentrate well and work hard. Most pupils have a secure understanding of how they can improve, although their understanding of their next

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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steps in mathematics is more variable. The most successful lessons move at a very brisk pace and there is a high level of challenge for pupils of all abilities.

Staff have improved the curriculum in recent years and have adopted a creative approach that makes good links between subjects. For example, computers are used well to support pupils' learning in mathematics and topics, such as the recent work on water, are a direct result of consultation with pupils. Revised approaches to planning in literacy, particularly the successful use of structured programmes for teaching reading and writing, have contributed to the rising standards. A similar approach in mathematics is beginning to bear fruit. Pupils benefit from a wide range of cultural and sporting opportunities outside of lessons. Staff incorporate regular 'wow' visits to their topics that greatly enhance pupils' enjoyment and learning.

The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils receive the support they need. All staff contribute to the good progress made by pupils new to learning English. Well thought-out programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including support from the capable teaching assistants, contribute to the good progress made by these pupils. Those who are potentially vulnerable are very well looked after. Systems to assess potential risk are systematic and thorough. The school has appropriate strategies for promoting good attendance and tackling persistent absence, including working with the local authority, but these are not yet securing sufficient improvement in the attendance rate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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?

The headteacher's pursuit of excellence and drive for improvement are shared by staff and governors. Systems to check on pupils' progress have been tightened, and the information gathered is used well to target support and hold staff to account. Governors are passionate about, and very supportive of, the school, and are taking good steps to gather first-hand information about its performance. Senior staff monitor the quality of lessons closely and identify areas for improvement, which are tackled systematically. Subject co-ordinators are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring the work in pupils' books. Nevertheless, senior staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and where it can improve, and this is reflected in the rising standards. A very close check is kept on pupils' welfare, including those who are potentially vulnerable. Systems to protect children are robust, and good safeguarding procedures ensure that the suitability

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of adults to work in school is monitored carefully. Staff welfare is paramount, too, and this is reflected in the school's Investors in People award.

The headteacher, staff and governors have an exceptionally clear understanding of the community the school serves and they promote community cohesion outstandingly well. This is a considerable strength of the school and is underpinned by a high level of commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and to tackling robustly the very rare instances of discrimination. Excellent steps are taken to broaden pupils' horizons and give them an understanding of their place in the wider world, for example by working closely with schools in Mumbai and Uganda.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and continue to make good progress through the Reception classes (FS2). The setting is well led and managed. A very close check is kept on children's welfare, and every step is taken to ensure that they are able to settle in well and gain confidence in speaking English. Staff work well together to provide an interesting range of experiences in each area of learning. There is a good balance of activities chosen by the children and those led by an adult, which promotes their independence well. Staff monitor children's progress thoroughly and their careful assessments build up a clear picture of how individuals and groups of children are learning and who might need extra help. As a result of the good teaching and support they receive, children achieve well and, most years, a majority of children reach the goals expected of them. Children in Reception have regular access to the well-resourced

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outdoor area, which promotes their physical development well. Access to the Nursery outdoor area is more limited. To compensate, staff plan plentiful amounts of time for all children to play outdoors, although they are not able to choose when to do so. Plans are in hand for reviewing and improving these arrangements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Those parents who returned the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about what the school provides for their children. Very few disagree with the statements included in the consultation. All indicate that they are happy with their child's experience at school and are making enough progress. Almost all note that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and the teaching is good. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Catherine 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 121 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 349 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	58	50	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	55	54	45	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	46	61	50	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	45	65	54	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	46	62	51	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	44	65	54	0	0	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	38	70	59	2	2	0	0
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)	41	35	68	58	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	32	73	61	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	37	62	51	5	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	33	72	60	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	38	68	57	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	47	62	51	0	0	0	0

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.



17 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Catherine Infant School, Leicester, LE4 6BY

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school recently and a special thank you to those who met with us to give us your views. You were very helpful and gave us lots of information. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Many of you told us that you are happy in school and feel very safe. We agree. Your headteacher and the other adults take good care of you and work hard to make sure that you can learn well. Your teachers give you interesting work to do in lessons and we could see that you behave well and try your best. Because of this, you are making good progress. Well done, and please keep it up, because it is very important. We were very pleased to see how well everyone gets along together. You are very considerate to others and you understand very well that some people have different festivals and celebrations from you. This is one of the reasons why your school is a very safe and happy place to be.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors are determined that it becomes even better. We have asked them to do two things, and we know you will want to help.

We want them to make your work in mathematics just as good as your reading and writing. You can help by listening carefully when your teacher explains how you can improve and by trying your best to do the things they say.

We want them to work with your parents to make sure that you come to school regularly. Remember, the more you come to school, the more you learn.

We wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead inspector

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