

Tiffield CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122031
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340074
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Pringuer
Headteacher	Heather Goodall
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors and a group of pupils, as well as speaking with pupils during lessons and with a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation and information, including assessment data, planning, policies and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised 20 questionnaires from parents and others from staff and pupils.

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

- the impact of initiatives to raise achievement, particularly in relation to more able pupils, mathematics at Key Stage 2, and writing in Reception and at Key Stage 1
- how successfully assessment is used to match work to pupils' needs, challenge them and provide them with good quality guidance for improving their work
- the extent to which pupils are developing an appreciation for the diversity of faiths and cultures beyond their own
- how effectively senior leaders, staff and governors work together to move the school forward and hasten the pace of improvement.

Information about the school

Tiffield is much smaller than many other primary schools. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes, one for Reception-aged children and pupils in Key Stage 1 and the other for those in Key Stage 2. A high proportion of pupils move in and out of the school affecting most year groups over time. Almost all the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities fluctuates, and is currently a little below average. A new classroom for Reception and Key Stage 1 was opened at the start of this school year. The school has gained a national award as a Healthy School. An after-school club operates on the school premises. This provision is inspected separately because it is not managed by the governing body.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the school's leadership and management, including governance.

While the school provides an acceptable standard of education, its capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate because it is constrained by poor relationships and communication between senior leaders and other members of the school staff. These circumstances mean that the school is not working with enough unity to ensure continuous and well-paced improvement, particularly with regard to raising standards and moving progress forward more swiftly. Staff work effectively in the classroom, but hold too few whole-school responsibilities. For example, there are no designated leaders to manage and develop the core subjects of English and mathematics and to evaluate the impact of action taken. Governors are committed and supportive. In particular, they have secured considerable improvement to the school's accommodation in the new classroom for Reception and Key Stage 1. However, the governing body has not taken sufficient action to resolve the difficulties between staff and the school's senior management or to encourage shared leadership of academic performance. These issues are now apparent more widely within the school's community, with a significant minority of parents expressing disquiet about the quality of leadership and management.

Despite these concerns, the large majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the school. Pupils, too, are happy at school and work hard. They enjoy their lessons and say they like a wide range of subjects. Behaviour is good and pupils show much care for each other, fostered by a strong level of pastoral support. These personal qualities illustrate strengths in pupils' social and moral awareness. However, their understanding is not so keenly developed beyond their own culture and traditions into those represented within different communities in this country and beyond.

The local authority is working closely with the school to extend monitoring and increase the pace of improvement. As a result, areas for development have been identified clearly. The day-to-day management of teaching is promoted by close liaison among part-time teaching staff and, especially, through discussions about pupils' progress. Satisfactory achievement and broadly average attainment are gained as a result of sound educational provision. Indeed, teaching is quite often strong, although its quality varies too much between satisfactory and good for pupils' longer-term progress to be any greater than satisfactory. Within this overall picture there are some instances of

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good progress, especially in the Reception class. Particular weaknesses in teaching relate to consistency of challenge and the quality of marking and feedback. These shortcomings have been identified accurately by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the school's capacity for sustained and rapid improvement by
 - establishing strong and productive working relationships and effective levels of communication across the staff at all levels
 - formalising and implementing leadership and management roles for key subjects and areas of the school's work to raise standards and move progress on
 - ensuring that the governing body takes focused and decisive action to promote effective working practices and unity of purpose within the school.
- Gain consistently good and better teaching and learning by
 - always providing good levels of challenge
 - giving pupils clear feedback in all subjects about how to improve their work.
- Enable pupils to gain greater awareness and understanding of the diversity of cultures, faiths and traditions in this country and beyond.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils show good levels of attention, and persevere even when they are sometimes not entirely sure what to do or activities are relatively mundane. They readily offer ideas and suggestions during discussion and respond particularly well to demanding, open-ended work - in mathematics, for example - including the more able. This positive approach brings much to their learning, and is reflected too in their enthusiasm for practical activity. Art is popular among pupils, for instance, and this enjoyment is illustrated in highly evocative and carefully executed pictures of winter trees produced by pupils in Key Stage 1.

Progress, however, is variable within and across key stages and subjects. Over time, therefore, it is satisfactory, rather than good, for all groups of pupils. While the very small size of each cohort means that attainment on entry varies from year to year, it is generally typical for children of this age on entry to Reception. The general picture of attainment at Years 2 and 6 has been broadly average over recent years. However, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the fluctuations in numbers caused by pupils leaving and joining the school, has a significant impact on the achievement of individual year groups. These factors account to a large degree for lower than usual national test results in the last two years, especially in mathematics in Year 6 last year. Pupils' work shows that those in the current Year 6 are progressing well. Attainment within this group is broadly average and more-able pupils are set to reach the higher Level 5. Checks on progress so far this term also show the positive impact on reading and writing of a more focused method of teaching letters and

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sounds with the youngest pupils last year, especially on those in Year 1 who have had this approach from the start of Reception.

Pupils say they feel safe at school. They are courteous and friendly to adults and with each other and report that others are quick to help out if they fall over or need some help. Year groups mix and work together easily during lessons and pupils report that there is no bullying. Their energetic, yet sensible, play at break time displays both their enthusiasm for physical activity and good common sense. They have a ready understanding of what makes for a healthy diet. Strengths in personal qualities are valuable assets both to the school's community and pupils' future well-being, as is their above-average attendance. There are few opportunities for pupils to contribute more formally within school, for example by assessing and discussing their work and achievement.

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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

While the quality of teaching varies, it is never less than satisfactory. A common feature is the benefit of close individual support from adults for pupils working in small groups.

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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In the most successful lessons, pupils are actively encouraged to try out a range of strategies and apply their knowledge to new situations, or learning is placed within a meaningful context. Where these characteristics are present, pupils are confident to try out different methods for solving mathematical calculations, or produce lively and interesting writing. Indeed, some pupils are sufficiently motivated to willingly select the more demanding alternative when given a choice. Lesson activities are not always this stimulating, though, and limitations take various forms. Sometimes progress is inhibited by unexciting or routine tasks, or younger pupils are not given enough opportunity to learn through practical experience in order to help them grasp more sophisticated mathematical concepts. On other occasions, quieter pupils are not challenged for an answer, or pupils are left for too long before staff check that they fully understand what they are doing. Some marking identifies clearly how pupils can improve their work, and this feature is strongest in English. Such useful feedback is not always the case, however, either for other subjects or consistently in English.

Curriculum planning provides securely for the wide range of year groups in each class and for all subjects. Visits out are popular with pupils - from theatre trips as a whole school, to class outings connected with work in the classroom. Termly 'themed' days further enrich pupils' experience, as does music tuition. Initiatives organised through the local 'cluster' of schools give additional opportunities - to the more able, for example - and a chance to mix with pupils from other schools. Useful partnerships with local secondary and primary schools also support pupils' physical education. There are some opportunities to link work across subjects. These links include information and communication technology, but the school is aware that the use of new technology to enhance learning now, and for the future, is still a relatively underdeveloped area. So, too, are opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own.

Staff know pupils very well individually. This factor is not only a key feature of the school's strong pastoral care, but also provides valuable information when evaluating academic progress and adjusting expectations and support, including for those with special educational needs. Pupils also point to the care of older pupils for their younger 'buddies', such that they feel they can turn to this partner for support if they are anxious or troubled. Outside agencies are used well and there are some notable examples where the deployment of outside support has proved to be successful with individual pupils, to monitor attendance for instance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	<p>2</p>

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's vision for the school and resulting action are currently compromised because senior leaders and other staff members are not pulling together as a team. The overall level of educational provision is satisfactory and the school has maintained good support for pupils' personal needs. These factors ensure equal opportunities for all pupils, satisfactory achievement and, therefore, adequate value for money.

Nevertheless, the school is not working as effectively as it did at the time of its last inspection, when academic performance, teaching and the quality of leadership and management were found to be good. Crucially, given the current weaknesses in working relationships, the scope for further development to provision and academic achievement, in order to lift them beyond their current satisfactory level, is greatly inhibited. The local authority is supporting the school with the recent introduction of a sharply focused programme for improvement. This initiative has led to increased expectations of progress, and also more focused monitoring, largely undertaken by the headteacher with the involvement of some governors. Together with improvements already made to assessment, these evaluations have provided an accurate set of priorities to work to. At present, however, responsibilities for taking initiatives forward and securing improvement are not clearly defined and so do not enable staff to share fully in their implementation and evaluate their success. The exceptions are the coordination of special educational needs and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governing body is supportive and its hard work has secured improved accommodation and facilities for the younger pupils. It recognises, however, that this building project has taken much of its attention. Governors have also had to deal with financial constraints, and are aware that the recent possibility of staff redundancy caused much concern within the school and among some parents. Nevertheless, the governing body, together with the headteacher, has not resolved the present difficulties among staff, nor tackled the decline in the school's effectiveness, with sufficient rigour. Despite these current issues, there is strong community cohesion between staff and pupils and particularly among pupils themselves. There is also much involvement with the immediate community, reciprocated in the considerable support locally to raising funds for the new extension. The partnership between home and school is largely satisfactory and governors are taking action to extend communication with parents. Pupils report trips to different places of worship, and there are some links abroad. However, the school is aware that it has yet to extend pupils' experience of life further afield. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory, with room for the sharpening up of some procedures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

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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	3
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

Carefully planned provision ensures the good progress of Reception-aged children within this mixed-age class. For example, last year's group moved into Year 1 with above average attainment. While benefiting from joint activities with the older pupils in the class, such as sharing a familiar and much-loved story at the end of the day, separate activities ensure that the particular and individual needs of these youngest children are well met. Sometimes, however, noise levels are allowed to rise a little too high and impinge on the work of other groups. Given the chance to mix with older pupils, personal and social skills develop rapidly. Children mingle confidently with those in Years 1 and 2. On their own, they share activities happily, either companionably side by side, or working and talking together about what they are doing. Teaching and support staff work as a close-knit team to manage provision and already have in mind improvements to develop the outdoor area. The new classroom is bright and attractive and resources are of a good quality. Children say how much they enjoy the 'home' corner and like its current role as a post office, where they can practise their writing skills in a 'real' context.

In line with the good level of pastoral care elsewhere in the school, attention to children's individual welfare is strong. Induction arrangements before children start school, the chance to follow up a short way into the first term and a warm welcome to the classroom at the end of the day, for example, ensure a productive relationship with parents.

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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

The majority of parents view Tiffield favourably. Almost all who returned inspection questionnaires felt their children enjoyed their school, while all agreed that their children were safe. Indeed, one parent commented that the pastoral care their family has received 'was second to none'. Key areas of concern are about communication, especially how well children are progressing and how much the school seeks parents' views. Inspectors found that governors are starting to take this in hand, through improvements to the school website for instance, and have also drafted a questionnaire for consultation. Other general concerns relate to the impact of small year groups and mixed-age classes, which were not found to inhibit learning. Just over a third of the questionnaires showed significant anxiety about leadership and management and this inspection found evidence to support these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tiffield CofE Primary 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 37 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	75	4	20	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	45	11	55	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	25	11	55	4	20	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	30	10	50	2	10	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	8	40	9	45	2	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	30	9	45	4	20	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	25	14	70	1	5	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)	4	20	12	60	2	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	50	6	30	1	5	1	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	40	10	50	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	35	8	40	4	20	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	25	7	35	2	10	5	25
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	50	8	40	2	10	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.



20 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tiffield CofE Primary School, Towcester NN12 8AB

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. It was good to hear you talk with so much enthusiasm about your trips out of school and the subjects you enjoy, and to speak with you about your work in lessons. You all mix together well and take good care of each other. This inspection found that your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education and, as a result, you all make the progress you should. However, it also found that the school needs a lot of extra help to improve how well it is led and managed. For this reason, the school has been given what is called a 'notice to improve' and been asked to do several important things to help it get better. You can help too, by continuing to work hard in lessons for example.

Here are some other important things the inspection found out

You behave well, are courteous and kind to each other and older pupils really look after their younger 'buddy'.

All the adults take good care of you and also track your progress carefully.

Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is most successful when you are challenged to find out things for yourselves - in mathematics, for example - or when you write about things that really interest you.

Children in the Reception group make good progress.

The new extension has given you an attractive new classroom and lots more space to play outside.

This is what the school has been asked to do to help make things better

Make sure that all the staff help the school to move forward, for example by taking more responsibility for improving things like different subjects, and that the school's governors also help to make sure that all the adults in school work together really well.

Always challenge you to do your very best in lessons and give you lots of advice and help about how to make your work better.

Give you all a much greater understanding and experience of the many different ways in which people live their lives in this and other countries.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies

Lead inspector

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