

Notley Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132020
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	341272
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Beth Gask
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Green
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The majority of inspectors' time was spent in looking at pupils' learning. Inspectors visited 24 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, and they spoke to parents. They looked at samples of pupils' work, analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring, the school development plan, risk assessments, the minutes of governors' meetings and the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 139 parents and carers.

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

- the start that children get off to in the school's 'Early Phase', which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1
- how teaching and support are helping girls and boys to build on what they have learnt before, especially in mathematics and writing in Key Stage 2.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but, of these, a relatively high number have a statement of special educational needs. Mobility, with pupils joining and leaving the school partway through their primary education, has been high in previous years but is now average. Notley Green has Healthy Schools, Activemark and Eco awards. The headteacher is also executive headteacher of another school within the county, and the deputy headteacher is designated as director of learning with responsibility for managing Notley Green Primary on those days when the headteacher is on secondment. The school hosts breakfast and after-school clubs. These are independently managed and were inspected separately.

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

Parents, pupils and staff are united in their view of Notley Green as a good and improving school. They are right. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year and they continue to make good progress through Key Stage 1, attaining above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is also good now in Key Stage 2 because the quality of teaching is much more consistent than it was. However, attainment at the end of Year 6 is average rather than better because pupils in the older classes have had to catch up on lost ground from previous years when they made less progress than they should. Fewer pupils are on track to attain higher levels in the Year 6 tests in mathematics than in English.

Greatly improved use of assessment information has meant that pupils' progress is now closely monitored throughout school. Any girls or boys who fall behind are quickly identified and support is put in place to move their learning on. Pupils have individual targets and they make good use of these to improve their work. The marking system, where teachers, and sometimes the pupils themselves, mark work 'tickled pink for success' or 'green for growth' has also contributed to the acceleration in progress since the last inspection. This is especially the case when pupils are given time specifically to reflect on the teachers' comments and to take account of them, as was seen in a Year 4 lesson, where pupils drew on the teacher's detailed individual feedback to develop second drafts of the poems they were composing. However, teachers do not always use the assessment information that they have available to plan lessons that match activities to pupils' individual needs. This sometimes means that more able pupils, in particular, make slower progress than they should because the work, for example in mathematics, is too easy for them. This is a point that some parents have noted. As one explained, 'I would like the children to be stretched more.'

'I really like the way our teachers make lessons fun.' This comment from a pupil gives a flavour of why the pupils enjoy school so much. This is a factor too in their consistently good attendance and punctuality because, as a parent told inspectors, 'My son cannot wait to get to school.' Teachers are especially successful in motivating their pupils, who are enthused too by the interesting themes which link subjects together. Pupils contribute their own ideas of what they want to find out by, for example, posting their questions on a 'learning wall'. They especially enjoy being given practical activities. As one explained, 'I really like the more active lessons.' It is when teachers' introductions go on for too long that progress slows as pupils grow impatient to get on with their writing assignments or practical tasks.

Notley Green prides itself as having been the country's first ecologically sustainable school. Staff have made it into a stimulating learning environment, and pupils, in turn,

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take a keen interest in and are eager to make a contribution to both the school and the wider community. Many are actively involved in the school's various 'working groups' and in the 'democracy days' run by the local authority. These encourage them to build on their experiences, such as being school councillors, as they move on to secondary school and beyond. Pupils take a growing interest in the wider world. They are involved, for example, in Notley Green's links with schools in Kenya and France, and they raise funds each year for charities which they collectively choose for themselves. Around two-thirds take part in at least one after-school club, including several that promote sports and the exercise needed for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe at school because of the good arrangements for their welfare, as well as the opportunities they have to learn practical safety skills such as basic first aid.

The significant improvements at this school since its last inspection are due to the commitment that all staff and governors share with the headteacher and the phase and assessment leaders, including the deputy headteacher who manages the school on days when the headteacher is on secondment. Together, they have been rigorous in tracking pupils' progress and monitoring every aspect of provision. In the words of a parent, 'They strive for excellence in all aspects, from the kitchen to the classroom.' They have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and their monitoring of lessons, in particular, has contributed to the improvements in teaching and learning seen since the last inspection. Leaders' sustained success demonstrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 to raise the proportion of girls and boys attaining Level 5 in the Year 6 tests in both mathematics and English by ensuring that pupils are always set work that challenges and extends them.
- Increase the pace of learning in lessons by ensuring that lesson introductions do not go on for too long and by giving pupils the opportunity to more quickly get on with their written work and other practical activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is above average through much of the school, but it remains average in Year 6 because these pupils, like those in previous years, had some disruption to their learning earlier in their school careers when teaching was sometimes ineffective. Now that pupils benefit from much more consistent teaching, and greatly improved marking and assessment all through the school, their progress is good. Pupils in Year 6 are overcoming their legacy of past underachievement, although the proportion projected to attain higher levels in mathematics remains lower than it should be. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support that helps them to make the same good progress as their peers.

Pupils get on well together and they behave well, both in lessons and around the school. They are especially keen to take on responsibilities in and beyond the school

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community. The opportunities that they have to organise events, including productions in the Notley Green's own amphitheatre, greatly contribute to their enjoyment of school, as well as to their developing sense of enterprise.

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	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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The good relationships in each class contribute strongly to pupils' growing confidence and the progress that they make. Pupils settle to the tasks they are given quickly and without fuss, and they work with effort and concentration because they like their teachers and are motivated to try hard. They only become restless on those occasions when they have to wait a long time to get started because the teacher's introductions have gone on for too long. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively, especially in supporting those pupils who need extra help with their learning.

A key element of most lessons is the emphasis placed on pupils identifying which learning skills they will need to draw on to achieve the lesson objective. Teachers also increasingly involve pupils in evaluating their own and each other's work. These features have helped to boost pupils' learning and independence, a notable improvement since

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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the last inspection. Marking and assessment have also contributed greatly to pupils' accelerated progress. Teachers take the time not just to correct and suggest improvements but also to model work in pupils' books to show them very clearly how to do better.

The curriculum is made interesting and fun for the pupils by the way subjects are linked together through stimulating themes. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2, for example, were working on a variety of activities linked to the Shrek films. In their enthusiasm, when working on similes, they came up with some imaginative similes of their own to describe the dragon in place of those offered by the teacher. Pupils are routinely encouraged to suggest for themselves things they would like to find out when, for example, they embark on a new history or science topic. French is taught throughout the school, and older pupils write en Français to pen pals in a school in France. The one concern about the curriculum voiced by parents was a complaint from some that outdoor physical education lessons were 'too readily sacrificed'. Inspectors checked this out and found that this related to the particular circumstances for a short period earlier this year in one class and that regular physical education lessons were now taking place consistently throughout the school.

Arrangements for pupils' welfare contribute strongly to the pupils' sense of safety and well-being. Staff draw well on partnerships with outside agencies to ensure that pupils who need it benefit from extra support. A parent of a child with special educational needs told inspectors, 'The school have supported my child so well that there isn't anything I would have wanted done differently.' Robust systems for discouraging avoidable absence have shown their effectiveness in the school's consistently above average attendance rates.

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 improvements seen at Notley Green are due to the shared vision, drive and ambition of school leaders, governors and the entire staff team. The adoption, throughout the school, of a series of 'core values' that feature, for example, as assembly themes, has engaged pupils too in leaders' vision for success. As a result, aspects of provision identified as weaknesses in the last inspection are now among the many strengths of the school. Leaders' monitoring of lessons has helped to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching because the feedback given to staff has

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succeeded in raising their expectations. Sometimes, however, leaders' observations give an overly positive view of the effectiveness of lessons when they focus on the features of teaching rather than on the pupils' learning and progress.

Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are thorough and that appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place. They also regularly review the impact of the school's work to promote community cohesion, which has been successful in raising pupils' awareness of other people's beliefs and ways of life in the United Kingdom and around the world. Equal opportunity is also promoted well in this inclusive school. Pupils with disabilities are helped to join in to the full, and any differences in the academic performance of girls or boys, or of other identifiable groups, are promptly identified and tackled.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children come from a wide range of different pre-school providers. Taken overall, their attainment on entry is below the level expected of their ages. Children make good progress during their stay in the 'Rabbits' and 'Ducks' Reception classes and, by the end of the year, most reach the expected levels in all areas of learning. This is because teachers plan a range of practical activities to ensure that children grow up as confident and independent learners while extending their literacy and numeracy skills. However, sometimes these activities are not sufficiently challenging to ensure that more able children achieve as well as they should.

In this well run provision, staff keep a careful track of children's progress. Adults have

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excellent relationships with the children and provide a safe and secure learning environment for them. There are good relationships, too, with parents, and the thoughtfully planned induction arrangements help the children to quickly settle into the school's orderly routines. When the children start in the Reception Year, spring- and summer-born children attend only part-time for their first term. Several parents feel that this is too long an induction period and say they would like their children to be able to attend full-time sooner.

Every morning, children arrive at the classrooms, confidently pick up their name to register themselves and engage in their own chosen activities with interest and enthusiasm. Then they join a teacher-led session in the carpet area and continue to be involved purposefully in whole-class and group activities. Throughout these activities, the children demonstrate a high level of motivation and enjoyment of learning. They love browsing through books, listening to story tapes and discuss their work in a mature manner. An attractive learning environment, with vibrant displays and a good range of resources, stimulate the children's imagination. They develop good coordination and personal skills as they explore the well-organised indoor and outdoor areas. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well integrated and benefit from very good support.

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

Although the majority of parents express positive views of the school, a significant minority voice concerns. Some call for improved communication with home, although many praise the extensive information provided to parents through, for example, home/school communication books, newsletters and the website. Several parents raised concerns over behaviour and instances of taunting. Inspectors saw consistently good behaviour and most of the pupils that inspectors asked said that they could raise with staff any incidents of unkindness and that they were confident that these would be dealt with. Some concerns were raised over pupils' progress. Although older pupils have underachieved in the past, inspectors confirm that the rate of progress is now good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Notley Green 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 390 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	49	61	44	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	78	56	58	42	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	29	83	60	13	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	34	70	50	20	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	49	35	80	58	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	29	86	62	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	35	81	58	8	6	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)	29	21	82	59	9	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	24	75	54	20	14	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	23	76	55	18	13	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	22	73	53	19	14	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	56	40	65	47	12	9	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	45	59	42	15	11	1	1

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.



1 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Notley Green Primary School, Braintree, CM77 7ZJ

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and we could see that for ourselves from your enthusiasm in lessons. Notley Green is a good school. It has come a long way since it was last inspected because of the team efforts of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the entire staff team. You are making good progress because the teachers give you interesting things to do and to learn. The targets you have, and your teachers' very helpful marking, are also helping you to improve your work. The children in 'Rabbits' and 'Ducks' get off to a good start. In much of the school, standards are above average, although those of you in Year 6 are still catching up on ground from previous years when you made slower progress and some of you fell a bit behind.

We were pleased to see good behaviour in class and around the school. You get on well together most of the time, and that helps to make Notley Green such a friendly, happy place to be. You feel safe at school because staff take good care of you, and we were impressed by the first aid certificates that so many of the older pupils have earned. Some of you told us that you particularly enjoy the practical activities that you are given to do. We could see that sometimes you get a little restless when lesson introductions are quite long and you have to wait before you can get on with writing and other practical tasks. We have asked your teachers to take account of this when they plan their lessons. We have also asked them to be sure that they always set you work that stretches you. For some of you, work can sometimes be too easy and you need to be challenged more if you are to do as well as you should and achieve high levels in English and mathematics when you go on to take your SATs at the end of the year. You can help by telling your teachers if you are finding your work too easy.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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