



Catherine Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120003
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 280705
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Capper AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Brandon Street
School category	Community		Leicester
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Leicestershire LE4 6AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2625896
Number on roll	385	Fax number	0116 253 8751
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Dee Bahra
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2000	Headteacher	Ms Joy Denning

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large junior school is situated close to the centre of Leicester. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties. Nearly all of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with most being Indian. About one in ten pupils is in the early stages of learning English, with the most common languages spoken by these learners being Gujerati, Panjabi and Hindi. Attainment on entry to the school at the start of Year 3 varies from year to year, but is below average in the current year. The headteacher was appointed in January 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that serves its community well. Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and science and pupils make good progress in these subjects from their starting points. In mathematics, standards are below average by the end of Year 6, with girls doing less well than boys. Pupils make only satisfactory progress in mathematics because there are not enough opportunities to build investigation and problem-solving skills across the curriculum.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers generally meet pupils' differing needs well and they make learning exciting in most lessons. However, teachers do not do enough to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. There is a good curriculum and pupils are well cared for. Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils from different backgrounds play and work together happily and are polite and courteous. They are confident and sociable, and take responsibility well.

The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have very high aspirations for the school. Their drive and commitment are moving the school forward quickly, though the tracking of pupils' progress from year to year is not rigorous enough to enable all weaknesses to be identified as soon as they arise. Nevertheless, their evaluation of school effectiveness matches inspection findings and they have a good understanding of what needs improving. Governors are supportive and have rightly identified the need to strengthen their role in monitoring the work of the school. Weaknesses from the last inspection have been successfully dealt with and there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in mathematics, especially of girls, by ensuring that teaching consistently builds on what pupils already know and extending the use of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve the use of target setting, marking and the tracking of pupils' progress so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve and members of staff can identify and respond to weaknesses more quickly.
- Strengthen the role of governors in monitoring how well the school is doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement and standards are good overall. Standards in English and science are broadly average and pupils make good progress from their starting points. The school has rightly focused on developing literacy skills. This has been successful in improving quickly pupils' reading and writing as well as their speaking and listening over the last two years, though handwriting continues to be a comparative weakness. In science, pupils respond especially well to the emphasis that is placed on learning through practical activities and to introducing new scientific vocabulary carefully. As a result, pupils make good progress.

In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress, but standards are below average, with girls doing less well than boys. The school has rightly identified that pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills are too weak. This is mainly because there are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in mathematics lessons or in other subjects.

The school sets realistic and challenging targets for standards by the end of Year 6 based on pupils' prior attainment. These were met in 2005. In general there are no significant differences between the progress of different groups of learners, including those with learning difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported well and quickly improve their spoken English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes towards learning. Behaviour is good and is sometimes exemplary. Attendance is just below the national average but has improved significantly since the last inspection because the school helps pupils to understand the importance of a good education.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their good understanding of the differences between right and wrong is evident in the class rules that they write. Pupils from different backgrounds get on extremely well together, respecting each other's beliefs in a sensitive and caring way.

Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example by working on various environmental projects and raising funds for charities. Members of the school council take their responsibility seriously: in discussion one said 'You feel proud that you are helping your classmates'. Activities such as these, as well as pupils' generally secure basic skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and eventually for the world of work.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

They happily take part in the sporting activities offered by the school, with the high standard of martial arts skills achieved in a 'Tetsudo' club being especially noteworthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Throughout the school, teachers' good relationships with their classes and their good skills in maintaining pupils' interest are reflected in pupils' sustained concentration in lessons. Teachers explain things clearly, enabling pupils to tackle their work with confidence, and they use homework effectively to build on what has been introduced in lessons. Teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work, but they do not consistently do enough to help pupils know how to improve.

In the most effective lessons, questioning is used very successfully to help pupils to think for themselves and to develop speaking and listening skills. For example, in an outstanding religious education lesson the teacher's questioning challenged pupils to reflect on what is meant by different religious symbols, promoting high quality responses.

During the inspection, a small number of lessons were satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons the pace of learning was more pedestrian, and work did not always build well enough on pupils' starting points. This was especially evident in mathematics lessons.

Teaching assistants give sensitive support to pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Teachers and bilingual assistants take care to explain new vocabulary to pupils in the early stages of learning English, helping to ensure that they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It successfully meets the needs of pupils and contributes effectively to their good achievement and personal development. There is a strong emphasis on developing basic skills, including the successful promotion of healthy and safe living. Creativity is fostered well, and pupils produce high quality work in art in some year groups, especially Year 4. Effective links between different subjects help to make learning purposeful, though not enough use is made of numeracy across the curriculum to build problem-solving and investigation skills. Increasingly good use is being made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, addressing one of the weaknesses from the last inspection well.

The curriculum is enriched through a good number of visitors such as theatre groups and musicians. Visits to local places of interest, as well as a residential trip to the Isle of Wight, bring the curriculum alive and have a good effect on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support given to pupils is good. Every child is valued and respected and all pupils are safeguarded well. There is good liaison with a range of outside agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The school works hard to support the small number of pupils who have low self-esteem. For example, a new programme is helping to improve the social skills of these pupils. Many pupils benefit from being able to go to a 'quiet room' at lunchtime to finish work or to reflect on their difficulties if they have fallen out.

Academic support is good overall, leading to good achievement over time. However, there are some inconsistencies in the way that targets are set for pupils and in the way that teachers use assessment information to ensure that differing needs are being met. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported, which enables them to make

good progress. Those in the early stages of learning to speak English are also given work that is well matched to their language and literacy needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The strong drive, commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have had a positive effect on raising standards. They have a very clear vision for the school, with all staff sharing a common purpose that puts the interests of the pupils first. Improvements over the last two years have been carefully planned, with the pace of change sensibly ensuring that new initiatives are securely in place and robust. A good example of this is the way that a drop in test results in science has been followed by decisive action to raise achievement by making this a whole-school focus for teachers, and ensuring that high expectations are consistent across the school.

There are satisfactory procedures for evaluating how well the school is doing. The monitoring of teaching is thorough and there is a clear understanding of what needs improving, especially in mathematics. The school has a vast amount of information about pupils' attainment. However, the systems for tracking pupils' progress from year to year are not yet rigorous enough to identify all weaknesses as soon as they arise.

The headteacher has worked very effectively over the last two years to extend the involvement of parents in their children's education by consulting with them regularly and by holding meetings about the curriculum and national test arrangements. Parents and pupils now make a greater contribution to school development planning; for example, their views led to an improvement in security around the school site.

Governors are supportive, but their role in monitoring the work of the school is limited. Nevertheless, the school has successfully dealt with issues from the last inspection and is well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so polite and friendly.

What we liked most about your school

•You do well in English and science because of the good teaching. •Your teachers are very kind and caring and they look after you well. •The school is good at teaching you about the importance of staying safe and healthy. •You enjoy school, behave well and work hard in lessons. Your well-organised school council helps you to contribute to school life. •Your headteacher knows that there are still things that could be improved and she is working hard to make the school even better. •Your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now

•Help you to do even better in mathematics by letting you practise your numeracy skills in different subjects and by making sure that work is not too hard or too easy for you. •Set you targets to help you understand how you can improve your work. •Use the information that teachers have about how well you are doing so that if you have difficulties you are helped quickly. •Help the governors to find out more about the school's strengths and weaknesses.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future.