



Merrydale Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120023
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 280711
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Claydon Road
School category	Community		Leicester
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		Leicestershire LE5 0PL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2767593
Number on roll	290	Fax number	0116 2761116
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Joan Chadd
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr Keith Lishman

Age group 3 to 7	Inspection dates 2 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	Inspection number 280711
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant and nursery school serves an area that has very many social and economic disadvantages. A number of key features have changed since the last inspection. A large proportion of children now come from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are thirteen different languages spoken. Movement in and out of the school is very high and many children arrive with little or no knowledge of English. Most children's attainment is very low when they start school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average.

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. It has met well the challenges posed by the changed nature of its intake. The quality of teaching is good. As a result, although standards are low in Year 2, children's progress is good. The information gained from the school's good assessment procedures is used effectively in planning and target setting. However, children's understanding of how to reach their targets is not yet wholly secure throughout the school. This limits the usefulness of the targets.

The quality of provision is good in the Foundation Stage. Children who find learning difficult for whatever reason make good progress in relation to their targets. High levels of care, support and guidance ensure that almost all children are successfully enabled to learn and develop, personally and academically. The outstanding work of the 'Nurture Group' is particularly successful in supporting the most vulnerable children. Within this positive picture, a small number of children who are capable of reaching higher levels do not always do so. This is because they are sometimes left to work for too long on their own without direct help from the teacher.

Effective leadership and management keep everyone focused on raising achievement. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and its own evaluation of its work is accurate and perceptive. It has successfully addressed all of the issues from the previous inspection. This, the commitment of the staff and the way they have faced up to new challenges demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more direct support for higher attainers in lessons in order to raise the numbers of pupils reaching higher levels.
- Help all children to understand their targets and how to achieve them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children's good achievement is the result of effective teaching and good leadership and management. These have successfully enabled the school to meet the unique challenges it faces. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics, though improving, are still low in Year 2. The children's initially poor grasp of the English language hinders their learning as they struggle to understand the meaning behind a written text or to solve word problems. Nevertheless, they quickly acquire social English and, by Year 2, have a greater understanding of the language and its use. The majority reach the point where they are well placed to catch up with what they have previously been unable to do. The strong emphasis placed on helping them to listen carefully and acquire a secure range of spoken vocabulary is improving their ability to read and write.

The school works very hard to reach the challenging targets it sets itself. It missed its targets last year because significant numbers of pupils left and others arrived in Year 2. Secure assessment data and the meticulous recording of pupils' progress show that there is good improvement, no matter at what point a child comes to the school, and whatever their background. However, the data also shows that a small number of pupils capable of reaching higher levels do not always do so. The school's involvement in an Intensive Support Programme has identified this and good strategies are in place to remedy the situation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is satisfactory. The school does all it can to encourage good attendance but the level of unauthorised absence is still relatively high. Children behave well and develop good attitudes to school, to learning, and towards each other. Relationships are good throughout the school. Children feel safe. They care for each other and are confident about approaching friends and adults for help and support. Play and lunchtimes are positive experiences, aided by a successful 'buddy' system, games equipment and the blue 'friendship seat'. Children very much appreciate the rewards for good behaviour, effort and hard work and are proud to receive their wrist bands from the headteacher. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle because the school promotes this well. Children reflect and consider the feelings and beliefs of others. Though literacy and numeracy levels are comparatively low, good social skills are effectively fostered from an early age, as are independence skills. For example, Reception children register themselves using the interactive whiteboard, and throughout the school, children show good levels of self-confidence, working on their own or in groups. Thus they are adequately prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good planning, which is evaluated well and based on accurate assessments of children's progress, results in good teaching and learning. The very effective use of highly skilled teaching assistants, several of whom speak a variety of languages, ensures that pupils who find learning difficult, for whatever reason, can participate equally well in all parts of a lesson. Occasionally, however, higher-attaining pupils are left to work on their own for too long and this limits their progress.

Teachers very effectively involve all pupils in whole-class sessions. They are very skilled at helping pupils to speak and listen, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary and involving all pupils in question-and-answer sessions. The very good relationships within each class give children the confidence to ask the meaning of words and phrases they do not understand. Techniques such as 'talking partners' are used very successfully, giving

children time to articulate their thoughts before answering a question. The technique was also used very effectively in one lesson to encourage children to improve the quality of each other's writing.

A particular strength, much appreciated by parents, is the way teachers very successfully use a nurturing approach to foster good behaviour and attitudes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well-founded curriculum supports the needs of the children well. It provides a good framework for teaching and learning and very strongly promotes speaking and listening skills in all subjects. Work is under way to promote reading, writing and numeracy equally strongly in other subjects but this is not yet fully in place. A good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum and provides pupils with many worthwhile additional learning experiences. The good programme for personal and social education is particularly successful in helping children to understand each other, and to begin to understand and become part of the different culture in which many now reside. The well-structured curriculum for the Foundation Stage gives children a good start in their education. There is good provision for children with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for children whose first language is not English.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Health and safety procedures are fully in place and child protection procedures are good. The outstanding work of the 'Nurture Group' successfully enables the most vulnerable children to take a full part in all that the school has to offer. High levels of personal care, guidance and support are given to all children. This very effectively supports learning and personal development. The school uses external agencies well and very successfully involves parents in helping their children to learn. For example, parents remain in school to read with their children at the start of the day. This builds their understanding of how to help their children at home and contributes to the children's improving progress.

Children and their parents are well supported at whatever point they start school. Good links with the junior school ease transition to the next stage of education. The school tracks pupils' academic progress well and sets targets accordingly. However, the process of involving children in assessment and target setting is not yet consistent throughout the school. This limits the effectiveness of targets as a means of guiding children and accelerating their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management keep the school highly focused on improving achievement and raising standards. Staff and parents speak very highly of the

headteacher's excellent support for them and for the children. They share his exceptionally clear vision of how to improve the school and know that their contributions are valued. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive response to the inspection questionnaire. The headteacher is very ably supported by the new senior management team, all of whom have a very good understanding of their different roles and responsibilities. This very successfully ensures that all children are fully included in all that the school has to offer.

The school's rigorous systems for checking how well it is doing ensure that it has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. This is helping it to move forward. Performance management systems are good. The links between targets, well-considered whole-school priorities and staff training are clear. Governance is satisfactory. Governors support the school well but they rely heavily on the headteacher for information. Their own role in checking the school's work is improving but not yet fully developed. Nevertheless, the school has moved forward considerably since the last inspection and clearly has the capacity 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	2	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	4	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	3	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	2	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

We very much enjoyed visiting your school. It was lovely to talk to you and to find out how well you are doing. I have asked Mr Lishman to read this letter to you. There are lots of good things about your school. Here are some of them:

- Your teachers do their very best to help you learn as well as you can.
- You behave well and are kind and helpful to each other.
- Your headteacher runs the school very well. He listens carefully to what you and your parents think.
- All the staff work very hard to make the school better every day for you.

We have asked your school to work at two things to try to help you to learn even more. These are:

- making sure that those of you who learn faster, get enough help to do so at all times
- helping you to understand what your targets are and what you have to do to achieve them.

We hope that you will always enjoy learning as you grow up.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector