

Cottage Grove Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 116203 |
| Local Authority | Portsmouth |
| Inspection number | 312213 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 November 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Janet Sinclair |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 352 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Dominic Chapman |
| Headteacher | Mrs Polly Honeychurch |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 September 2004 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Chivers Close Southsea PO5 1HG |
| Telephone number | 02392 341133 |
| Fax number | 02392 341144 |

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 November 2008 |
| Inspection number | 312213 |

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cottage Grove is a larger-than-average primary school. When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), many at the age of three, their skills and knowledge are low. Pupils' entitlement to free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These relate predominantly to moderate learning and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Over a third of the pupils in the school speak English as an additional language with some at an early stage of learning English.

The school has Investors in People status, and the Healthy Schools and Artsmark Gold awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate because there is significant underachievement across the school, which has continued for several years.

Standards are low. This is in spite of continuing high-level support from the local authority across all aspects of leadership and management. There has been an overall deterioration since the last inspection, when the school was considered good, which significantly limits its capacity to improve further. Teaching over time has not had sufficient impact on pupils' progress and is still not good enough to tackle the legacy of underachievement within the school. While some new teaching initiatives are in place and are currently being implemented consistently, they are too new to make it possible to measure their impact or sustainability. Teaching does not challenge pupils enough to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. Specialist provision, through small group and individual support, for pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English ensures they make sound and sometimes good progress towards the targets set in their individual plans. In all other respects they make similar progress to their peers. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make excellent progress due to the outstanding leadership of the experienced EYFS coordinator, who ensures provision is very well matched to their needs.

The curriculum has been revised recently so that it engages pupils' interest more readily. However, the work planned does not cater sufficiently for pupils' literacy and numeracy requirements, particularly in the mixed-age classes. The school provides a good range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors, which enrich the curriculum. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school. Behaviour is satisfactory and many pupils behave well. They feel safe within the school's supportive and caring environment. However, their attendance remains low. Leaders are committed to the school and show this through the high level of pastoral care they provide for pupils. Staff create a safe, caring environment and this ensures pupils feel well supported. They also involve pupils more fully in their learning by giving them individual targets for literacy and numeracy, which pupils are beginning to use to improve their work. Weaknesses in the use of systems for academic guidance have hampered pupils' progress over time and continue to do so. Leadership is unsatisfactory because leaders have not dealt with the underachievement, which has persisted for some time. Although all leaders are enthusiastic and keen to improve, they lack a clear sense of direction or a rigorous analysis of priorities that would help them to achieve their goal. This lack of effective self-evaluation has led to a more positive view of their performance than the inspection team found in almost all respects. Monitoring of teaching and learning, although regular, is not sufficiently focused on the outcomes in terms of pupils' learning, so is often too positive. The school's improvement plan, which is detailed, does not have clearly measurable success criteria as a benchmark for the effectiveness of initiatives. This makes it difficult to ensure accountability from senior and subject leaders or to help governors monitor the work of the school accurately.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's achievement in the EYFS is outstanding. Staff are skilled in meeting the needs of these very young children, the majority of whom start nursery with low communication, language and social skills. The excellent level of care given to children in both the nursery and reception classes helps them settle quickly and learn to work and play together in a safe, supportive and exciting learning environment. Careful observations and assessments are used to plan appropriate activities across the EYFS. As a result, the majority of children achieve the standards that are expected of them by the end of the Reception Year. Partnership with parents, pre-school providers and other agencies helps to support children's learning well. One of the strengths in teaching is the way staff work together as a team, making the best use of the space and resources available to make learning fun but highly effective. The use of bilingual staff to support children who speak English as additional language is having a very positive impact on their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement by ensuring that all lessons provide activities that match the needs of pupils of all abilities in each class.
- Ensure systems to track and analyse pupils' progress provide information that clearly shows pupils' rates of progress, particularly in the longer term, so that the school can take effective action more promptly.
- Ensure that the school's improvement plan contains clear success criteria, so that outcomes can be accurately measured and all leaders held accountable, in order to accelerate the pace of change within the school.
- Improve curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy in the mixed-age classes so that it caters for the full spread of ages and abilities.
- Improve attendance by continuing to emphasise to parents the impact that absence from school has on their child's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils are not achieving well enough in English, mathematics and science. In general, they do not meet the targets set for them. In an effort to improve mathematics, the school organises Key Stage 2 classes according to pupils' ability levels. However, teachers do not make sure that pupils explain the strategies they use, nor do they enable pupils to take responsibility for their learning through problem-solving or using and applying mathematical concepts. In English the school now provides more focused termly assessments. It has recently introduced additional support for writing in other subjects. This is showing some early success in that most pupils enjoy their writing activities. Staff also ensure that pupils have individual targets and work is marked consistently. There are some indications that this is helping to improve progress. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties receive good support individually or in small groups, which helps them to make progress. Those at an early stage of learning English get good support from bilingual assistants, so that they quickly learn to use English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Although pupils' personal development and well-being have many strong aspects, attendance is poor and inadequate skills in English and mathematics do not prepare pupils sufficiently for the world of work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils reflect thoughtfully in assembly and have a keen sense of right and wrong. They have very positive attitudes towards the wide range of cultures represented at the school and their knowledge of cultural diversity in Britain is good. They are generally eager to learn and enjoy lessons. Relationships throughout the school are positive and most pupils are well behaved and friendly. However, some pupils exhibit challenging or silly behaviour, which others find disruptive and hurtful. Pupils feel safe because they know staff will help should they have any worries. They contribute well to the school and wider community in many ways. For example, pupils help with a range of tasks around the school, while some serve as 'squabble busters'. The school council is involved in decisions on play equipment and fund-raising events for charities such as Barnardos. Pupils are developing a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles through eating sensibly and using the many opportunities provided to take regular exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is inconsistent across the school and is not having enough impact on pupils' learning. Some lessons are well organised and managed and relationships are good, so that pupils engage in their learning and enjoy their work. For example, in a Year 5/6 class, the teacher had high expectations for pupils' learning, so that they were fully engaged and made good progress in converting units of measure. However, there is also less effective teaching where expectations are too low, opportunities for pupils' independent learning are limited, activities go on too long or the teaching is dull. Staff do not always challenge pupils sufficiently through effective questioning. In mixed-age classes teachers tend to focus their planning and questioning on one year group, which means that the needs of all pupils are not met. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning through the support they provide for small groups. However, their contribution during whole-class introductions is often limited. A positive aspect of teaching this term is the consistent approach to marking as a means of helping pupils to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum has recently been revised and this is leading to improved enjoyment for pupils, because it is now better focused on developing their skills through interesting links with other subjects. However, this revision has not had sufficient impact on improving the pupils' progress because the curriculum is not always well matched to the range of ability in the mixed-age classes. A strength of the curriculum is the good enrichment, provided by a wide range of popular after-school clubs. Additionally, all classes make frequent educational visits and receive visitors, such as those from the health, police and fire services. Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language get good specialist support to help meet their specific needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and the strongly caring atmosphere makes an effective contribution to pupils' enjoyment. As one parent wrote, 'Staff are always friendly and approachable, taking all my concerns into account.' The specialist team of support workers is particularly effective in helping pupils with their pastoral, behavioural and learning needs. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by the school, often in a good partnership with outside agencies such as the local authority's behavioural unit. Procedures for safeguarding all pupils are securely in place and the school promotes pupils' health and safety adequately. The school has rigorous procedures for promoting attendance. However, attendance rates continue to be below average due to a significant number of poor attenders. Overall, academic guidance is unsatisfactory because although the school monitors pupils' progress conscientiously, it has not used its systems well enough to monitor progress over time and this has allowed the underachievement to continue. Teachers have begun to give pupils useful information on their progress and to guide them in their learning, but this is still very new and not yet leading to improved progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Senior staff and subject leaders work hard and are keen to bring about improvement. They talk eagerly about the strategies they have put in place, but they do not have a clear view of how effective their actions have been in accelerating progress. Recent initiatives are promoting greater consistency in marking and target-setting, and more enjoyment of the curriculum. These are being monitored well by senior staff, but it is too early to judge their overall impact in terms of improving pupils' rates of progress. Although governors are supportive and have the appropriate committees in place to monitor the work of the school, they have limited impact on helping the school address its weaknesses. This is partly because there are no clear criteria by which they can measure the effectiveness or otherwise of the school's key areas for improvement.

The school has good links with its local community through an effective 'Community Improvement Partnership' and effective links with parents who are very supportive of the school. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
|---|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 4 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 1 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 1 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 4 |

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

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 4 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

Leadership and management

| | |
|--|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 4 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 4 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | Yes |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cottage Grove Primary School, Southsea, PO5 1HG

Thank you for all your help during the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed our visit and were particularly impressed with your friendliness. We found your school was caring well for you and providing you with lots of extra activities that you thoroughly enjoy. We know you feel safe in school and trust the adults taking care of you. However, many of you do not do as well as you need to in your English, mathematics and science and the school staff need to help you to make better progress.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- help you to do much better in all your work, but especially in English, mathematics and science, by ensuring you are fully challenged in all lessons
- ensure it carefully checks all of its work so that it improves quickly
- help you to do better by ensuring your teachers plan work that is at the right level for each year group and develops your skills fully
- improve the way it checks how well you are doing so you do not fall behind again
- encourage your parents to send you to school, unless you are very unwell, so that you can benefit from all the activities on offer.

We have decided that your school requires special measures. This means that although your school does some things well, in some important areas there are weaknesses and it needs help to sort these out. Your school has been asked to improve these things as quickly as possible. You and your teachers will get plenty of help to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress that you are making. I am sure you will want to help with improvements by working as hard as you can.

We enjoyed talking to you and wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Janet Sinclair

Lead Inspector