

College Town Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109828 |
| Local Authority | Bracknell Forest |
| Inspection number | 325038 |
| Inspection date | 15 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jonathan Palk HMI |

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.

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 271 |
| 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 | Mrs Angela Tickner |
| Headteacher | Mrs Trudi Sammons |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 May 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Branksome Hill Road College Town Owlsmoor Sandhurst GU47 0QF |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 3–7 |
| Inspection date | 15 January 2009 |
| Inspection number | 325038 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the school development plan in providing a sustainable platform for school improvements and the effectiveness of school leaders in managing the action stipulated
- pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics
- the use made of assessment information to improve learning in lessons and raise standards
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EFYS).

Evidence was gathered from the examination of school documentation, discussions with pupils, school staff and a governor, and observations of some lessons and other school activities. The inspector took account of parents' views expressed in questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not accurate, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

College Town Infant School is larger than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a part-time Nursery with 52 places, that admits children during the term they reach four years old, and a Reception class. Admission arrangements are such that a significant proportion of pupils who enter Year 1 have received just one term of full-time schooling. The school is close to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst which accounts for about a quarter of the pupil intake. Many more pupils join and leave the school at times other than the normal entry times. Many of those joining the school as a result of postings to the base have no experience of the English primary curriculum. While the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is above average, most speak some English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The range of difficulties and disabilities includes speech and communication problems and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The headteacher took up post one year ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents and pupils are rightly proud of College Town Infants and Nursery because it is a good school. Parents value the staff's 'commitment to all children' and nearly all agree with the parent who said, 'a well-led school, focusing on children's welfare and education'.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of areas for immediate action and this has been extremely well focused through the school's good development plan. She is well supported by committed and knowledgeable governors who provide the necessary challenge through regular checks on the school's performance. Senior leaders are effective in managing the action to bring about improvement. The immediate review of senior leaders' roles and responsibilities has ensured that the well-devised strategic development plan has been implemented successfully. Leaders have developed their roles quickly, particularly in supporting modifications to the curriculum for those who are at risk of slipping behind. Senior leaders' accurate appraisal of the quality of teaching has made sure that effective guidance has been given to staff to improve their practice. The previous strengths in working with the community through partnerships, such as the extended school service, have benefited from this review of responsibilities and the subsequent appointment of a home-school link worker. As a consequence, strong relationships have been forged with the Nepalese community, which ensures effective support for their children's learning and for those who have recently arrived into school. The recent changes in the leadership of the EYFS help provide a more consistent experience for the youngest children.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are satisfactory and improving rapidly through good use of assessment information. Although there is a wide range of abilities, children join the school in the EYFS from a starting point below that usually found for children of this age. Their language skills in communication and thinking, and in writing, are below the levels expected for their age, as is their knowledge of how to link sounds and letters. Calculating skills are also below expected levels. Most pupils are achieving well and the more able pupils are getting the challenge required to enable them to reach their potential. However, the school's data show that a few of the more able pupils have still to reach the challenging targets set for them in writing and mathematics. This is mainly because the impact of the improved opportunities to write for a range of purposes and more opportunities to develop mental reasoning skills, is slow to materialise. The most recent national curriculum tests and teacher-assessed tasks at the end of Year 2 show that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities performed better than similar groups nationally. However, the results highlighted areas of underachievement in reading, and also in writing among the more able boys.

While the school has robust systems in place for tracking pupils' progress this is not being used well enough. The leadership team have effectively revised assessment systems to show and track individuals' progress. Targets are realistically based on the pupils' previous attainment and regular monitoring by senior leaders means that no pupils are now at risk of falling behind. The school's most recent analysis is rigorous and shows good progress in reading for all pupils. The additional reading opportunities, including a reading club which every child attends at some point, are also accelerating progress. Combined with this, additional small-group reading sessions are specifically linked to pupils' development and understanding of letters and sounds. Together, these initiatives have had some remarkable impact on the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties. The specific programmes for those pupils learning English as an additional

language have been jointly planned with the junior school and this is ensuring no time is lost when pupils transfer.

The school rightly judges teaching and learning to be good. There are significant strengths in the quality of teachers' planning and their use of assessment information to help them organise the learning and ensure good progress. For example, there are several grouping arrangements that ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs, and those whose language skills are less well developed are appropriately supported. The expectations of learning for the more able and the less able are clearly stated and give a clear steer to the lessons. This is accelerating pupils' learning and the school is on track to meet challenging targets. Good attention is also given to how children learn: there is plenty of opportunity to use computers; whiteboards help sketch out initial ideas; discussion with partners and role play develop thinking. However, not all lessons make the most of practical activities to help pupils develop their mathematics and writing skills and this limits what some pupils could achieve. The teaching assistants provide good support and teachers use their expertise wisely to help pupils of all abilities. The pupils learning English as an additional language are given the right support to help them develop comprehension and this contributes to the good progress they make in language development.

Pupils are well cared for. Staff have a good understanding of the emotional and academic needs of the pupils. Care is taken to follow up those families where attendance is below average and the school is taking robust measures when attendance is unauthorised to secure the safety of pupils. The atmosphere in lessons is extremely positive and pupils enjoy school. The pupils are very well motivated to learn and have a very good understanding of what is required of them to be good learners. This is well supported through the marking of work and the system of rewards that recognises personal achievement. Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent and the respect they show for each other when sharing resources or listening to each other is impressive. The teachers manage the lessons very well, giving plenty of opportunities for pupils to have their say and giving them time to explain their thinking. This makes a good contribution to learning in lessons.

School leaders have effectively managed the reorganisation of the curriculum into themes that overlap skills development. This has strengthened the good curriculum and successfully addresses the previous key issue for the school. Teachers consider it has re-energised their teaching because it provides a clear structure to developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. There is good support for the curriculum from the community, particularly knowledge of the various cultures represented in school, understanding of disabilities and for spiritual development. The many opportunities for pupils to work together and to devise their own research offer good preparation for their move to the junior school. Recent collaborations between the infant and junior schools in the teaching of reading and moderation of writing have strengthened transition arrangements. The range of after school clubs, that include Nepalese dancing, are good for an infant school and are well supported.

The good leadership and management, and the improvements to teaching and assessment, are resulting in good progress. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress from their different starting points. Their progress in the Nursery class is good. Staff know the children very well and plan accurately to meet their needs. Children's progress in the Reception class is satisfactory. Children are at very different starting

points in their communication and language development and by the end of the Reception year these gaps still remain, particularly in their knowledge of how to link sounds and letters. Not all children receive the help they need to reach their potential because expectations of what individual children could achieve are not always high enough. There is a good mix of child- and adult-initiated activity but teacher-led activities are not always pitched at the right level and don't always provide enough challenge. Children start the EYFS with personal and social skills that are meeting expectations and they make good progress in this area of their learning through good-quality care and welfare. They are confident and enthusiastic and develop independence through good opportunities to learn through play. The use of the outdoor areas to enrich both children's knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development is too variable and limits the progress children can make in these aspects of their learning and development. The leadership of the EYFS, despite being temporary, is good and has led to some important improvements in assessment, the quality of play and learning and the better progress children are now making.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more opportunities are provided for pupils to learn through practical activities, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the planning of activities in the EYFS so that they more closely meet the needs of all children and make full use of the outdoor area.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

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

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| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

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

28 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of College Town Infant and Nursery School, Sandhurst, GU47 0QF

We really enjoyed our day with you and were very impressed by your friendliness and good manners. It was very helpful to talk with you, join you in lessons and have the chance to look at some of your workbooks. Your school is a good school and here are just some of the reasons.

- You have excellent attitudes towards learning and you work hard.
- Your teachers and learning support assistants teach you well and you understand what it is you need to do to be good learners.
- You are kind and helpful to each other and your teachers.
- The school looks after you very well and helps you to develop as healthy, thoughtful and caring young people.
- The teachers plan the lessons well and are good at organising help for those that need it most.
- You have a good curriculum and the teachers encourage you to ask interesting questions. Your parents tell us they are very happy with all the school provides.

Most of you are achieving well. You are all making rapid progress in your reading and you can all help by working even harder with your writing. Your headteacher leads your school well. The staff work together as an effective team to do their very best to provide you with a good education. We have asked the teachers to do two things:

- ensure that the lessons they teach include more practical ways of learning
- make every effort to improve how they plan activities for children in the Reception class.

Yours faithfully

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector