



Cavalry Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110674
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288736
Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Marina Gough

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cavalry Drive
School category	Community		March
Age range of pupils	5–11		Cambridgeshire PE15 9EQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01354 652814
Number on roll (school)	319	Fax number	01354 658094
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jo Mills
		Headteacher	Mrs Val Spriggs
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group 5–11	Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007	Inspection number 288736
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated on the outskirts of the market town of March and draws pupils mainly from the local area. The area is one of social deprivation. When children start school their attainment is very low, especially in the areas of language and number. Most of the pupils are of white ethnicity, and only a very small number of pupils are learning English as a second language. A higher than average percentage of pupils has learning difficulties, including three pupils who have a statement of special educational need. The school has a Quality Mark, Artsmark, and National Association of Advisors for Computers in Education (NAACE) mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that is constantly striving to do even better. The inspection findings closely match the school's own evaluation of its relative strengths and weaknesses demonstrating that the school is extremely well placed in terms of identifying the next steps in its whole-school improvement programme. Since the last inspection the school has moved forwards at a good and well paced rate so that change has been brought about in a measured and effective way. The school gives excellent value for money.

The children get off to a good start in Reception and achieve extremely well from a very low starting point. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils of all abilities make excellent progress so that by the time they leave school at the age of eleven their attainment is close to, and sometimes slightly above, the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school has rightly identified that there is still some more work to be done in helping pupils to become more skilled in the investigative elements of science and mathematics. The initiatives that have been put into place are already having a most positive impact.

Pupils love coming to school. Pupils show high levels of excitement and enthusiasm in lessons and take a full part in the many activities the school provides. They especially enjoy practical activities such as sport, art and music. Older pupils appreciate the effort that staff make to ensure lessons are interesting, and have been highly motivated by the recently introduced Japanese lessons. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well. A few still have some difficulty in managing their own behaviour but they receive excellent levels of support from staff so that they too can participate fully in the life and work of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and know how to keep safe in school and at home. They make a positive contribution to the community and are developing skills which will prepare them well for the next steps in their education.

Teaching is exceptionally strong and some is simply inspirational. Teachers work hard to improve their practice and readily take on board advice from senior members of staff and colleagues. This willingness and desire to keep getting better is a characteristic of the school at all levels, and sets an excellent example for the pupils. Teaching assistants play a good role in supporting staff and pupils and contribute much to the learning of those pupils who find aspects of their work difficult. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to learn and make progress. The curriculum for Reception children is good, and there is an excellent balance of activities the children choose themselves and those that are directed and led by an adult. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils benefit from taking part in an extremely rich and varied range of activities but the recent focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills has temporarily squeezed out other subjects.

The leadership of the school is outstanding, and as a result, pupils of all ages and abilities achieve exceptionally well in relation to their starting point. The headteacher, senior staff and governors work extremely well together to ensure that there is a clear

agenda for improvement that maintains a strong and central focus on raising standards still higher. Change is excellently paced so that staff and parents are fully behind new developments. Imagination and creativity are celebrated and promoted so that the school is a vibrant, flexible and stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in investigative science and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

When the children join the school their attainment is very low, especially in terms of their early language and number skills. Because of the strong focus on these early basic skills the children make excellent progress and achieve extremely well.

In Key Stage 1, the pupils continue to blossom and to build upon the skills they have learned in Reception. Teachers give pupils a real thirst for learning so that they readily tackle new learning. They achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics, although standards do not always reach the national average at the end of the key stage. By the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven their attainment is close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. This reflects the excellent progress they continue to make as they move through Key Stage 2. However, a few have difficulty in making generalisations and in transferring their existing knowledge to new situations. This is especially the case when pupils carry out investigations in mathematics and science where they are required to identify a problem, seek a solution, and select an appropriate method of enquiry.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From the time they join the Reception class, pupils are given clear parameters to guide their behaviour, and the way in which they interact with others. The vast majority of pupils behave well, show concern and consideration for others, and take responsibility for ensuring that the school is, in their own words, a 'kind school'. Pupils of all ages are eager to learn. They invariably try their hardest and want to achieve well. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and know the value of exercise. An effective school council enables pupils to become actively involved in helping to shape their own community. Its members speak with justifiable pride about their contributions to improvements to the playground and to school meals. Pupils' moral, social, spiritual and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. By Year 6, most are mature, thoughtful and confident young people, well set for the next stage in their education.

Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about coming to school and attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Where teaching is at its 'breathtaking' best, it is characterised by exceptionally high levels of challenge for the pupils, tremendous enthusiasm, and most significantly a sparkle and sprinkling of humour which make learning irresistible for the pupils concerned. Teaching is often exceptional in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning in the Reception classes are of a consistently high quality. The very good focus on teaching children the early basic skills through an exciting programme of play activities has a very positive impact on their learning and progress.

In all classes teaching assistants play a valuable and central role in supporting pupils who find aspects of their learning difficult, and in implementing the many strategies that the school offers to boost pupils' learning in key areas.

Assessment information is used very well to inform the next stage of pupils' learning, and pupils are encouraged to evaluate the extent of their own learning, and to identify what they have to do to improve the standard of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The statutory curriculum is significantly enhanced by a very good range of after-school activities that are well attended and very popular. In the Reception classes the strong focus on learning through play captures the children's interest and enthusiasm and does much to set secure foundations for future learning. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad, but recently the balance has been lost a little because of the school's justifiable focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. The school has already identified the need to emphasise better literacy work through other subjects, and this has already begun to be implemented.

The school places a strong emphasis on the 'arts' and pupils thoroughly enjoy their music, art and drama lessons and the many after-school activities that further enhance their learning in these areas. The school choir is very well attended and the singing is of an exceptionally high standard. The ongoing 'grounds project' has provided an excellent link with the local community as parents, staff and pupils join forces to design and build the new environmental classroom.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is excellent, enabling them to achieve their potential. More able pupils are well stretched in their learning so that they too achieve their potential.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent procedures are in place for child protection and for health and safety. Staff know pupils and their families very well and provide them with additional support when necessary. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place. The school does much to remove barriers to pupils' learning, and to promote equality of opportunity. The school works hard to promote healthy lifestyles, and is imaginative in its approach to changing pupils' perceptions and introducing them to different options. Staff carefully monitor pupils' academic performance with the main emphasis being on English and mathematics. Pupils understand their targets in these subjects and know what they have to do to improve their work. Parents and carers are kept very well informed of their children's progress, and are fully involved in decisions about their children's learning. Excellent links with a variety of external agencies strengthen the provision for pupils who have social, emotional and learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. She has very high aspirations of the pupils, and a real commitment to ensuring that they do their best. She is keen to encourage individuality and to celebrate and value imagination and innovation.

The headteacher and deputy form a very strong and complementary team. One of their strengths is the way in which they analyse data and information from monitoring activities so that they are clear about how to advance the pupils' learning, and further improve the quality of teaching. Together with other senior staff the headteacher and deputy have set a very clear agenda for the continued improvement and development of the school, which is based on an accurate and realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. Change is managed extremely well so that all involved in school development are enthusiastic, committed and well focused. Staff are very reflective and are keen and very willing to review and improve their practice.

The governors play an excellent role in the strategic management of the school. They support the school extremely well by ensuring that necessary funding is available for new initiatives, and by challenging the senior staff in their thinking so that new ideas are well thought through. Governors have a very good grasp of how well the pupils are achieving, and the notion of raising standards is central to whole-school development planning.

The school is very well placed for the next stage of its development and provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2007

Dear Pupils,

Cavalry Primary School, Cavalry Drive, March, PE15 9EQ

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visited your school a short time ago. I am pleased to say that I very much agree that Cavalry Primary is an excellent school. You obviously enjoy coming to school, and are keen to take part in lessons and in the many activities that the school provides for you after school and at lunchtimes. I really enjoyed listening to the choir practice, and wished I had been there for the concert band practice the day before the inspection started.

You told me that you like your work, and I agree you have to work hard. You do well and often really well in your lessons, and make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science. I think that some of you could do even better in working out problems in mathematics, and in knowing how to go about carrying out science investigations by yourself. I have asked your teachers to do some more work with you in these areas, and you could certainly help in mathematics by continuing to learning your times tables. Your writing is much better than it was, and you have made a lot of progress in this aspect of your learning. Your teachers are spending a lot of time on doing literacy work with you and this is really paying off. I have asked them, though, to see if they can combine this extra work with other subjects so that you do not feel you are doing too much literacy work each day.

Most of you behave well in lessons, and you are kind and polite to one another. You know you can go to your teachers if you are in trouble, and you have learned a lot of strategies to help you to stay safe at home and at school, and ways of being healthy. Your teachers go to a great deal of trouble to make your lessons interesting and exciting, and you told us you really like art, drama and music lessons. I was really surprised to find that some of you are learning Japanese, and am very pleased you like this activity.

I think your headteacher and the staff and governors are doing a splendid job in running the school. They keep looking at ways of improving things even further, and this is a good way of making sure that the school keeps moving forwards. They are keen to make sure that they take your ideas on board, and the new environmental classroom is a great example of what can be achieved when everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Best wishes,

Marina Gough (Lead inspector)