

Knutton St Mary's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133993
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	381586
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Newman
Headteacher	Janet Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2009
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	24–25 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Doris Bell

Additional inspector

David Channon

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 10 teachers during 14 lessons, covering approximately eight-and-a-half hours of teaching. As well as observing full or part lessons, inspectors spent time observing sessions where pupils were learning letters and sounds. They heard pupils read, watched them being taught in small groups and individually, analysed their work, and discussed their learning with them. Meetings were held with senior and middle managers, representatives of the governing body, and the local authority. A wide range of documentation was analysed, including information relating to the achievement of all groups of pupils, as well as the school improvement plan, governing body minutes and evidence of monitoring and evaluation. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also spoke to parents and carers, and analysed 80 parental questionnaire responses, as well as responses to the questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school has an above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ranging across behaviour, learning, physical and medical needs. A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The school has its own breakfast club. It recently renewed its Healthy Schools status, it holds the International Schools Bronze Award, and it has been awarded the Anti-Bullying Pledge. It meets the current government floor standard. There has been a great deal of instability in staffing in the past two years.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Senior leaders' drive to improve provision, and middle leaders' support in this, kept the school on an even keel during the period of instability. That same determination is now improving it, although improvement planning sometimes focuses more on provision than on outcomes.
- Teaching observed during the inspection was mostly good or better but over time, it is satisfactory, as is pupils' achievement. Good practice in teaching is not sufficiently shared between staff.
- Based on past results, attainment is below average but it has improved in the past two years. Current attainment in school is broadly average in English and mathematics in Year 6, and broadly as expected for pupils' ages in Years 3 to 5. The progress pupils are now making is compensating for previous weaknesses in attainment.
- From low starting points, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here, and in Years 1 and 2, work linking sounds and letters is successfully improving reading, writing and spelling. Older pupils' reading skills are satisfactory, but their ability to break words down in order to read and spell them accurately is relatively underdeveloped. The current emphasis on using and applying mathematical skills is improving progress in that subject. The practice is not fully embedded throughout the school.
- Pupils' learning is assessed and tracked meticulously, using a variety of methods. It is difficult to gain from them an immediate overview of how well each year group is doing because results are not always closely enough linked to national criteria. Nevertheless, the information is used well to set challenging targets and to adjust learning to suit pupils' different levels of ability.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils care for each other and enjoy the safe, secure learning environment created for them. They, and their parents and carers, are highly satisfied with the school. Pupils say, 'Teachers are kind and care for us.' Parents and carers say their children are happy at school and describe staff as '...approachable and very helpful'.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - in English, extending the teaching of letters and sounds to reach all pupils who need this support, in order to improve reading and spelling
 - in mathematics, fully embedding the work done so far on using and applying mathematical skills in problem solving activities involving real life situations.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning throughout the school by:
 - sharing good practice
 - ensuring progress measures are always related to National Curriculum benchmarks
 - ensuring strategic planning has a sharper focus on improving outcomes as well as provision.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers feel their children are making good progress and the school meets their particular needs. The inspection found progress is satisfactory over time for all groups of pupils. It is starting to quicken throughout the school because gaps in learning are being identified early and closed systematically. Precisely targeted support ensures disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those whose learning falters from time to time, make at least satisfactory progress. More-able pupils also receive support that helps move their learning on, for example, in reading comprehension. Well-briefed and well-trained support staff play an effective part in all of this.

Children start Nursery with low literacy and numeracy skills, and, particularly this year, some very underdeveloped personal skills. When they leave Reception, despite having made good progress, their overall attainment is still well-below average.

Standards in reading are broadly average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils read frequently in school, and increasingly at home. They enjoy reading because books are closely matched to their different ability levels. They are particularly enthusiastic about the 'reading round the world' project, and demonstrate an appropriate range of strategies to help them if they get 'stuck'. The wider range of vocabulary they gain from reading is improving their writing. Spelling skills remain relatively weak in Years 5 and 6, where pupils have not had the benefit of the linking sounds and letter work evident in earlier year groups. Pupils use their writing skills well in other subjects and are mindful of their targets as they do so.

Challenging mental starters require pupils to think, count and calculate rapidly, and their mental mathematical skills are improving as a result. Pupils very much enjoy the increasing opportunities they have to find things out for themselves and to link their learning across subjects. This was evident in the well-focused investigations that enabled pupils in Year 5 to analyse and interpret data, and link it to work in science, but is not as secure in all age groups.

Quality of teaching

Teaching over time has been satisfactory, but parents and carers are right to say that much is now good. Teaching and the curriculum support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are successfully taught to reflect on the impact their actions have on others, and to realise the importance of getting on well with everyone. Parents and carers recognise this too.

Pupils' work is usually well planned to meet their individual learning needs. Links between subjects are promoted well in the curriculum. In most lessons, reading, writing and numeracy skills have a purpose, and effective marking and good use of assessment in lessons keep pupils focused on their targets. For example, pupils' writing about the rainforest shows flair, and cross-curricular mathematical work is enhancing learning in subjects such as science. This was made explicit in an excellent Year 5 mathematics lesson, where the teacher showed pupils how learning to interrogate data in mathematics would help in a subsequent science investigation.

Teachers are mostly skilled at using pupils' responses to take their learning further. In an excellent Year 6 lesson, pupils were set the task of finding the angles in different triangles. After checking pupils' individual understanding, groups were re-arranged and prepared worksheets distributed that provided the right level of challenge according to need. In the best lessons, finely targeted support for pupils of different abilities provides opportunities for all groups to flourish. Where teaching is less successful, and occasionally inadequate, there is little evidence of this approach. At such times, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take their learning further, and they become disengaged because they lose interest in what they are doing. While behaviour is usually managed well, pupils sometimes spend too long without being actively involved in learning, so they become restless because they want to get on with the tasks planned for them.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have their targets on bookmarks, so that they can refer to them at all times. These pupils have very specific and measurable targets that ensure their progress is at least satisfactory. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated into the school and make the same rate of progress as all other pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all pupils, parents and carers say that behaviour is nearly always good, and that the school deals effectively with any that is not. Inspection findings support this view. Pupils report that there is very little bullying, and they are proud of the school's anti-bullying pledge award. They are confident that staff will always help them, and

say that, '...really, everyone is kind at this school'. The school reaches out to parents and carers, and works closely with the community and a range of external agencies to support pupils' behaviour in and out of school. The school is used by the local authority as an exemplar of good practice in managing difficult behaviour. Attendance is improving. Although average over time, it has been above-average since the start of this school year.

Pupils work together well. From the earliest age, they learn to share resources and to help, respect and support each other. They grow in confidence, from children who are very uncertain about communicating with others in Nursery, into young people who, by Year 6, engage well with others and are increasingly able to hold and justify their own opinions. The school keeps pupils safe and successfully teaches them how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.

Pupils show initiative in helping others and in securing a warm and friendly learning environment. The 'friendship team' provides a good lead in dealing with moral and social issues within the school, for example, leading an assembly where pupils demonstrated a good understanding of right and wrong, and the importance of positive social interaction. Their work successfully creates in the pupils a strong sense of belonging to a school that is a cohesive community with a common purpose. Pupils have a developing understanding of democracy gained, for example, through the work of the school council. They are keenly aware of the need to care for and respect others and the environment, gained through studies of different faiths, cultures and customs at home and abroad. This work starts at an early age, and was evident as Reception children learned about and enthusiastically enjoyed a range of Chinese food.

Leadership and management

Effective systems are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve teaching and learning. The headteacher has trained senior and middle managers well so that all contribute effectively to them. Robust action is taken to tackle underperformance by staff or pupils. Areas for improvement are followed up with support and guidance, and re-visited to ensure they have been addressed. This has enabled the school to show good improvement in the issues raised at the previous inspection. The impact of professional development since that time has been limited by staff absences. However, staffing is now more stable and strong teamwork is evident throughout the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and well founded, and the governing body holds it to account well. Taken together, all of this enables the school to show at least satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of different groups of pupils satisfactorily. It promotes their personal development, health and safety well. The breakfast club and the 'Boyz Noyz' boys' choir, which rehearses before school, have improved attendance and punctuality. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and clubs, including a homework club. Pupils hit the ground running at the start of each term with a theme that engages them and gets their learning back on track after a holiday. All of this is helping to increase the pace of pupils' learning.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. It tackles any form of

discrimination very robustly and ensures that all pupils have equal access to all activities. However, not enough has been done to ensure that all groups of pupils make consistently good progress in their learning at all times. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. They are given high priority in this inclusive school and contribute to all pupils, from the least to most vulnerable, feeling safe and well-cared-for. Parents and carers praise the school for this, commenting especially on the provision made for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, which has greatly improved since the previous inspection.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Knutton St Mary's Primary School, Newcastle, ST5 6EB

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school, for making us so welcome and for talking with us about what you do there. You go to a satisfactory school that is working hard to help you make better progress and reach higher standards in your work. This is beginning to happen because the school's leaders and managers check how well you are being taught and help and guide staff in helping you to improve. One of the ways in which they are doing this is ensuring that you learn how to link sounds and letters to help get your reading off to a good start. This is clearly happening already, even in Nursery and Reception.

It was good to hear that you enjoy school. We agree with you and your parents and carers that the school looks after you well, and that your behaviour is good. You told us everyone was kind at your school and that you feel very safe and secure there, and we can see why. We were particularly impressed with the work of the friendship team in helping others to see why it is important to work together towards ensuring the school is a safe and happy place for you all. We have asked the school to work on several things to help you make faster progress in your learning.

- Extend the teaching of letters and sounds to older pupils who still need support in that area to improve their reading; and ensure that the work on real-life problem solving in mathematics takes place throughout the school.
- Work towards making all teaching equally good, relate your targets more securely to National Curriculum levels, and ensure that plans for improvement focus on improving your learning as well as on how well you are taught.

We hope that you will help the school to do these things by continuing to work hard, and that you will continue to enjoy learning for the rest of your lives, as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector

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