

The Reginald Mitchell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124090
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359582
Inspection dates	30 November 2010–1 December 2010
Reporting 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Blood
Headteacher	Alan Stancliffe
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
School address	Congleton Road Butt Lane, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 1NA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons and saw seven teachers and one teaching assistant teach. They also met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and safeguarding policies and procedures. The responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires were analysed, as were those from 118 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is the school doing enough to improve progress for more able pupils, especially in writing in Key Stage 2 and mathematics in Key Stage 1?
- Are teaching, learning and the curriculum strongly enough focused on promoting basic skills, especially writing and mathematics, in all subjects?
- How well do leaders and managers at all levels understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities, given the recent changes in the management team?

Information about the school

This average size primary school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, consisting of part time Nursery-aged children and full-time Reception-aged children. It also has a breakfast club and an after-school club, both run by the governing body. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A very small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The school was awarded Healthy Schools Status in 2009, in which year it also received the Eco Bronze Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils achieve well because they are taught well. Changes in the leadership team have been managed well. Senior leaders fully understand their roles and responsibilities, and they have established effective teamwork amongst the staff. All staff are focused on helping pupils to succeed, personally and academically. Initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy have enabled the vast majority of pupils currently in school to make the same good progress as pupils in previous years. This is evident in most lessons, in pupils' work and in data held by the school. The school's self evaluation is broadly accurate. Although over-cautious at times, it shows the school knows itself well, has set the right priorities for improvement, and is working purposefully towards them. Taken together, all of the above shows that the school has good capacity for further, sustained improvement.

Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception, and, from a low starting point, attainment rises to average in Year 6. In 2010, it was above average in mathematics. More able pupils in Year 6 did not all reach the higher levels in English, and more able pupils in Year 2 did not all reach the higher levels in mathematics. The better match of learning to pupils' different levels of ability is helping to address these issues. However, throughout the school, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to write at length, and the otherwise well-planned curriculum does not provide teachers with enough guidance in this. In mathematics, harder work is planned for more-able pupils but they do not always engage with it because they too often have to start at the same point as other pupils. Assessment procedures have improved considerably since the previous inspection but marking is inconsistent. It does not always show pupils what they need to do to improve.

Pupils behave well and they feel very safe in school. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They work and play in a safe, secure learning environment free of harassment of any sort. The governing body supports the school well and ensures high quality pastoral care, guidance and support for pupils and, where necessary, their families. It does not take an active enough part in monitoring the school's work. The school's engagement with parents and carers is excellent. The school actively seeks out reasons for any underachievement and, wherever possible, it helps all pupils, and especially those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, to get their learning back on track. This also enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the same good progress as all other pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of more able pupils in writing and mathematics by:

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- in writing, giving all pupils more opportunities to write at length in different subjects
- in mathematics, moving more able pupils onto the harder work planned for them, sooner.
- Improve marking so that it always leaves pupils clear about how to reach their targets, and involve pupils more in assessment to help them understand what they need to do to improve.
- Increase the governing body's involvement in setting the school's priorities and the rigour with which it monitors progress towards them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children start school with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. Literacy and social skills are especially low. Good progress throughout the school ensures that by Year 6, attainment is at least average.

Pupils enjoy learning because, they say, 'teachers make our lessons fun'. They take pride in their work and present it well. They develop good information and communication technology skills, which they use well across a range of subjects. In literacy lessons, pupils learned the mechanics of writing well, undertaking a variety of exercises that helped them to spell accurately, and to use correct grammar and punctuation. In longer pieces of writing, pupils showed they know how to adapt their writing to suit different audiences and purposes. There are also good examples in some year groups, of pupils writing up investigations in science, recording historical information, or expressing feelings and opinions in personal development sessions. However, they do not have enough opportunities to do this in all classes because writing opportunities are sometimes restricted to completing worksheets or labelling diagrams. Pupils develop good mathematical skills, which they use well to solve mathematical problems. They understand the importance of this for their future economic well-being. In mathematics lessons, pupils persevered with often challenging work, but more able pupils did not always get on to the extension activities planned for them in lessons because they sometimes had to repeat too much basic work first.

Pupils' excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe extends to helping each other in and out of class. This was very evident in the inclement weather as they played safely in the snow, reminding each other of the need to keep warm, and helping to search for a lost glove when a pupil became upset. Pupils throughout the school care for and respect each other and adults. They report that there is no bullying, and that any untoward behaviour would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. They and their parents and carers have a high degree of confidence in the school with regard to this.

Pupils know why it is important to follow a healthy lifestyle. They make healthy eating choices and large numbers participate in the excellent range of sporting and exercise activities that take place in and beyond the normal school day. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They willingly accept and carry out a range of responsibilities, for example, as school councillors and play leaders. Their eco work instils in them a good understanding of the need to care for the environment, and they do this well. They develop a sound understanding of different faiths and cultures, for example, through their work in religious education. All of the above, taken alongside the

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good progress in basic skills, and average attendance, means pupils leave the school well prepared for their future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school ensures that transition from one phase or one year group to another is made as easy as possible for the pupils, to ensure their learning is continuous. The excellent links with outside agencies support those pupils from the most vulnerable circumstances and all pupils are supervised well to ensure they are always very safe and secure. Relationships are excellent throughout the school, pupils are known as individuals, and the school works hard to meet their individual needs. They and their parents and carers recognise and very much appreciate this. Pupils' work is celebrated well, including in excellent displays throughout the school. The curriculum supports pupils' health, safety and well-being effectively. The excellent range of clubs, visits and visitors enhances pupils' learning and personal development, and gives them experiences they would not otherwise have. Different subjects are brought together in topic-based work that provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their numeracy and information and communication technology skills further. However, opportunities are missed to promote extended writing within this, and therefore to help pupils make faster progress in writing.

The information gained from assessment outcomes is used effectively in planning to match pupils' work to their different learning needs. The strong focus on practical work

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increases pupils' motivation, engages their interest and awakens in them a desire to find out more. This was particularly evident in a science lesson, where Year 3 pupils investigated the properties of different materials and in a mathematics lesson, where Year 2 pupils learned to count and use money to buy goods.

Annotations on teachers' planning show that teachers adjust it in response to how well pupils are learning. Where the best teaching was seen, learning was also adjusted during lessons, meaning that all pupils, from the least to the most able, were appropriately challenged. There are examples of good marking across the school, with development points showing pupils what they need to do to improve, and pupils responding to the comments made. However, this good practice is not consistent. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about the smaller steps they need to take to reach their targets, or how to assess whether or not they have done so. Where teaching was only satisfactory, over-long introductions meant pupils did not always get on to individual work quickly enough. This limited the amount of work they did in lessons and, in literacy, meant they did not always have enough time to complete writing tasks, thus affecting their progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have successfully embedded in all staff a strong ambition to help pupils do as well as they can, personally and academically. As well as driving improvement through their own monitoring and evaluation, they use external support effectively, to check that teaching and learning are improving as a result of their actions. The outcomes of all monitoring are followed up in staff meetings and in performance management targets for individual members of staff. This, along with pupil progress meetings, has led to greater accountability and a shared understanding among staff of their collective responsibility for the outcomes in Year 6. The school involves parents and carers exceptionally well in its work, helping them to support their children's learning.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body ensures all statutory requirements are met but its role in challenging the school and helping to set its direction, is under-developed. Good attention is paid to promoting equality of opportunity. This is an inclusive school, where pupils' good progress and personal development instils in them good attitudes to learning, and acceptance of those who are different from themselves. The school understands its own context, and the community it serves, well. Residential visits in this country and in France, ensure pupils learn about different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds at home and abroad. Pupils' work in religious education introduces them to different faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom.

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Good practice is adopted across all aspects of safeguarding, and internet safety forms a strong part of this. Documentation is detailed and training is up to date for all staff and governors. The school is passionate about ensuring pupils are safe and well-cared-for at all times. At present, it does not involve parents, carers and pupils as much as it could when reviewing its procedures. It does involve external agencies effectively in this and in supporting pupils' learning and personal development overall.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction procedures ensure children settle quickly into well-established routines, enjoy learning and relate well to adults and to each other. They benefit greatly from the strong links established with their parents and carers, and from the exceptionally good care staff take to ensure their health, safety and well-being.

Children are taught well and there is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Occasionally, however, introductions are rather long, and do not fully engage all children, most of whom are eager to get onto the exciting activities prepared for them. These include good opportunities to develop early reading, writing and number skills, indoors and outside. During the inspection, children thoroughly enjoyed finding shapes, and 'writing' numbers and letters in the snow. Their creation of an ice snowman led to an almost tangible sense of awe and wonder as they talked about, drew and photographed the changes taking place as it melted.

Staff gently encourage children to become more independent in selecting activities, dressing themselves, and tidying up at the end of a session. They extend children's vocabulary well while doing so, encouraging them to pronounce words correctly and to talk in complete sentences. Provision, leadership and management are good in this age

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group and children make good progress. However, overall attainment remains below average at the end of Reception.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The return from the inspection questionnaire was higher than in most primary schools and it showed that parents and carers are highly satisfied with the school. All parents and carers, including those to whom inspectors spoke, said they are happy with what the school does, that teaching is good and that the school keeps their children safe. Comments such as 'I have no concerns (or complaints) whatever', 'I am extremely pleased', 'staff (including the headteacher) are approachable and friendly and have time for parents and children' are typical of those received by the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Reginald Mitchell Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 239 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	81	21	18	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	99	84	19	16	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	86	73	30	25	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	85	72	30	25	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	92	78	26	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	84	71	33	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	62	43	36	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	63	53	48	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	68	36	31	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	59	44	37	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	57	44	37	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	97	82	20	17	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	80	24	20	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



2 December 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of The Reginald Mitchell Primary School, Butt Lane ST7 1NA

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us. It was a real delight to talk to you, and to find out how much you enjoy school and are proud of what you do there. You and your parents and carers are right in thinking you go to a good school, where you are kept really safe and well cared for, and where you make good progress. You in turn behave well, you are polite and friendly and you look out for each other. You have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Your healthy eating choices demonstrate this well as do the impressive range of sporting activities you participate in with good success. Those responsible for leading and managing the school do a good job but we noted that some of you do not do as well in writing and mathematics as you should. We have therefore asked the school to:

- give you more opportunities to write at length in different subjects, and to make sure that those of you who are capable of doing harder work in mathematics, get to do it as soon as possible in lessons
- ensure marking always leaves you clear about how to reach your targets, and to involve you more in assessment to help you understand what you need to do to improve
- help governors to play a greater part in checking the school's work.

You can help by continuing to work hard, listening to your teachers, and always doing your best to correct and improve your work. We hope you continue to do well and to enjoy learning as much as you do now, for the rest of your lives.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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