

Squirrel Hayes First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124062
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359575
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Yvonne Mills-Clare

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Fletcher
Headteacher	Erica Smith
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
School address	Springfield Road Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7DF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed and five teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, including a review of improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching, records demonstrating arrangements for safeguarding, and a sample of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed 29 questionnaires from parents and carers, 44 questionnaires from pupils and 16 from staff.

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

Are pupils making consistent progress across the school?

- Are all groups of pupils doing as well as they can?
- How well is assessment being used to ensure tasks are well matched to ability and are all pupils challenged to achieve their best?

Information about the school

All pupils at this smaller-than-average primary school are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. While the number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is high. A number of staff have joined the school since the last inspection.

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 that provides good value for money. Since the last inspection, the school has built upon its strengths with the result that pupils' attainment has improved year-on-year. Pupils' achievement is good; their rate of progress has improved because of good teaching and an increasingly creative curriculum. Having entered the Nursery with skill levels below those typical for their age, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Year 2. Most make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school, reaching at least the expected standards at the end of Year 4.

Through effective programmes for personal education, all pupils make good gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The procedures for safeguarding are exemplary and outstanding links with parents, carers and other outside agencies ensure that pupils receive exceptional care, guidance and support. This is much appreciated by parents and carers who typically say, 'The teachers in this school know every child well and provide a real nurturing environment for them.'

Teachers have a good command of their subjects. Various teaching styles are used effectively to engage and motivate learners. Thorough evaluation of what pupils can do informs lesson planning. However, the work provided to challenge and extend pupils does not always necessitate them using the skills they have learned in order to develop their thinking. Pupils routinely assess their own learning in lessons, but they have fewer opportunities to extend these skills by reflecting on others' learning, particularly in end-of-lesson discussions. Improving basic skills and a willingness to learn ensure a sound foundation for future success. Behaviour is good and relationships within the school are excellent. Pupils are proud of the good contribution they make to their school and local community, although work to widen pupils' horizons in national and global communities is still in early stages of development.

Pupils and staff thrive under the far-sighted and dynamic leadership of the headteacher. She, together with enthusiastic senior and middle leaders, have successfully created a school that embraces all learners. The determined and imaginative work of the school's leadership team and governing body has improved the education for all its pupils. School self-evaluation is accurate and detailed. Effective monitoring is raising attainment and the school has proved itself well since the last inspection. Leaders know where they are going and how to get there, giving them good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise standards of attainment, particularly at the higher levels, by:

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- creating more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, particularly in mathematics, in practical and real-life situations;
- extending and developing pupils' evaluative skills to enable them to reflect on others pupils' learning, particularly in discussions at the end of the lesson.
- Develop pupils' understanding and awareness of other communities and cultures beyond those of their own experiences.

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

Children relish their time in school, saying it is 'brilliant'. They are active learners, particularly when lessons include practical activities, and are eager to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils were enjoying the opportunity to work collaboratively in planning a route to be taken and one pupil quite rightly remarked that 'making mistakes is part of the learning journey'. Similarly, a Year 2 mathematics lesson gave pupils the opportunity to cut cake into pieces to evidence their understanding of 'equal' parts. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a history of social, emotional and behavioural needs, respond exceptionally well to the values of the school, work hard and achieve in line with their peers. Pupils show respect and care for each other. Attendance is broadly average. Despite rigorous actions taken by the school and local authority, a few pupils are persistent absentees.

Differences in the attainment of particular groups of pupils and between subjects are being eradicated through personal programmes of work for each pupil. Coupled with effective support where needed, the vast majority of pupils are now making accelerated progress. An increasing proportion of pupils are achieving the levels expected for their age and pupils are achieving equally well in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of these rigorous programmes, which are based on thorough assessment systems, Year 4 pupils are better prepared for moving on to the next stage in their education.

The school's calm, caring ethos promotes a strong sense of 'belonging' and pupils show empathy and care towards others. Pupils happily take on responsibilities across the school, such as 'Super Squirrel Squad' and the school council provides a good forum for pupils' views. They feel that their contributions are valued and that they play a positive part in the running of the school. They talk proudly about their allotments and the vegetables they grow and sell. In these important respects they are developing skills which prepare them soundly for later life. The pupils take exercise regularly, eat healthily and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. Water is available throughout the day and healthy meals are eaten at lunch time. Through events held in school pupils raise money for charity.

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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	3
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?

High expectations permeate the school. Planning for lessons is detailed and teachers are successful in matching activities to individual pupils' preferred styles of learning and to their abilities. Additional tasks, however, to challenge and extend pupils' learning are not always as successful because they are not sufficiently focused on the application of skills learned. Skilled support assistants contribute considerably to pupils' learning in individual and group work, not only through their effective support but also by the teaching of skills pupils can use when working independently. Rigorous and robust systems are in place to keep a check on pupils' progress. Marking provides useful guidance for the next steps in learning, particularly in literacy.

The curriculum is good because basic skills in English, mathematics and science are provided for well and there is plenty of breadth, for example in clubs, visits and visitors. An impressive feature is the way the school ensures each pupil follows a personal programme matched to their needs. The strong focus on the key subjects of English and mathematics is evidenced in pupils' raised attainment. Cross-curricular links are developing through literacy, mathematics and science, but are less evident in information and communication technology.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Excellent identification strategies, effective interventions and well-targeted support are available, particularly for pupils with social and emotional difficulties. A well-established and resourceful team ensures that this high

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quality is maintained. Very effective links with a range of health professionals and agencies support pupils and their families, and smooth induction and transition at all levels.

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 are clear and determined in their pursuit of excellence and have the skills and enthusiasm to achieve it. The headteacher has made perceptible changes since taking up her post, particularly in raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. Through rigorous and regular monitoring, thorough evaluation and next steps planning for improvement, leaders have improved teaching and enhanced learning. Robust systems track pupils' progress and are used effectively to identify and provide for pupils who need additional support, or for those who have a particular gift or talent.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body provide practical support as well as holding the school to account. Effective systems enable the governing body in developing a strategic overview of the school from which to contribute fully in the monitoring and evaluation of improvement. At the time of the inspection, excellent policies and procedures were in place to ensure all adults have an in-depth understanding of safeguarding pupils. These arrangements are regularly checked and evaluated by the governing body. Procedures to identify, monitor and support vulnerable pupils and their families are exemplary. The school is a cohesive and harmonious community, within which all groups are treated equally and where excellent partnerships contribute strongly to the good progress made by pupils needing additional support, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Community cohesion is satisfactory. Links to promote pupils' understanding and awareness of other cultures and communities, although planned for, are currently at an early stage of development. Leaders work hard to promote equality of opportunity and develop individual pupils' strengths. Leaders have successfully remedied disparities in attainment between different groups and are closing the gap between subjects. Links with parents and carers are exemplary; the school values their participation highly and provides many opportunities to involve them in their child's learning.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with skills levels that are below national expectations. Good teaching, a range of activities and a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities and access to the outdoor area ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning, and the majority of children enter Year 1 working comfortably within the Early Learning Goals. Excellent links with parents and carers ensure that children settle quickly into the setting. As a consequence, children feel very secure and make the most of their time in school, acquiring and developing good learning skills for the future. Effective teamwork and focused leadership and management promote the children's personal development and welfare extremely well. Books shared between the school and home offer parents and carers the opportunity to contribute to their children's learning. Formal and incidental assessments are used thoroughly to inform planning. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader shares expected outcomes and key questions for individual activities with staff on a daily basis, but these are not always written on formal planning. While this generally works well enough for adults who are regularly based in the setting, it does not take account of any occasion when this verbal briefing may not be possible. Adults guide some activities with subtle expertise but allow the children to decide how each experience develops. The organisation of activities into 'five challenges' effectively takes account of the different age groups and children's individual stages of learning. Provision for outdoor learning is good. Spacious, well planned facilities allow children further choice and provide extra resources to support their development across all areas of learning.

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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

Though a minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, their responses were extremely supportive. Nearly all were positive about the school and their child's education, and confident that their children are safe in school. The inspection findings support these views. A very few parents expressed concern that the school does not deal sufficiently well with unacceptable behaviour. This was looked into, together with individual concerns, but no evidence to support these was found during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Squirrel Hayes First 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	83	5	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	69	6	21	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	76	6	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	72	7	24	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	69	7	24	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	41	15	52	1	3	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)	14	48	14	48	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	59	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	52	11	38	3	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	38	17	59	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	66	9	31	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	76	6	21	1	3	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Squirrel Hayes First School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7DF

Thank you so much for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed being part of your school community and finding out your views. I am writing to let you know what we thought.

You told us how very kind and helpful pupils are to each other and that you are happy to talk to one of the staff if you have a problem. Your parents and carers are really well involved by the school in helping you with your work so that you do particularly well in your lessons. Your school provides you with a good education. You behave well, work hard and have a very positive attitude to everything the school offers. You feel very safe and well cared for and enjoy your lessons, clubs, and visits out of school. All this is happening because all adults involved with the school care very much about how well you do.

So that your school can become even better we have asked your teachers to do certain things. When you finish your work, you often are given something more difficult to do, possibly with bigger numbers. We have asked that teachers make sure that is a problem or a puzzle so you have to use what you have learned in different ways to find the answer. You always show your teacher how well you have done in the lesson, by colouring what you needed to learn. You do this really well, so we have asked your teachers to make you think hard about how well you think others have done in the discussions at the end of the lessons. You have lots of responsibilities in school and help the local community by growing your own vegetables and selling them. We have now asked your teachers to help you know more about other cultures and communities in the world.

You can help by making sure you keep coming to school, on time, every day. We wish you all for a very bright and successful future.

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Mills-Clare

Lead Inspector

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