

Netherton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103841
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	376977
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley HMI

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	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Laver
Headteacher	Andrew Rushton
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons taught by 13 teachers. They held meetings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the senior leadership team, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors looked at key documents including the school's plans for improvement and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They analysed questionnaires returned by 104 parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and members of staff.

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

- Does teaching provide sufficient challenge for all pupils?
- Are standards in writing high enough?
- How effective is provision for the high proportion of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable?

Information about the school

Netherton is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average, with just a handful at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils with a statement of special educational needs, those eligible for free school meals and looked after children are all above the national averages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to average. More pupils join the school at other than the usual times than in most schools.

The headteacher was appointed in April 2010. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Leading Parent Partnership Award and Artsmark Gold 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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the pupils' attainment and achievement.

The proportions of pupils making the expected progress in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics are slightly above the national averages. However, despite this satisfactory progress by all groups within the school, the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 6 is low, particularly in writing. Attainment is not improving quickly enough because of inconsistent teaching. Teaching is satisfactory but there is not enough good and outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. Consequently, their preparation for the next stage of their education is inadequate.

The features of teaching that are limiting better progress include: lesson introductions that are too lengthy and so restrict the opportunities pupils to have to apply their skills; tasks that are too easy for some pupils and too hard for others, and questioning that provides few opportunities for pupils to explain their ideas or show their understanding. Pupils' attainment in writing is low because the curriculum, while satisfactory, does not provide sufficient opportunities for them to write on topics that motivate them and have a real purpose. Despite these weaknesses, pupils behave well in class. They enjoy school and are friendly and polite to one another and visitors. They feel safe at school, because behaviour is so positive and because of the school's good safeguarding procedures and its good quality of care, guidance and support. Attendance is broadly average and improving. The calm and reflective atmosphere in assemblies and the harmonious relationships between pupils from different backgrounds underline the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

There have been important changes to the leadership team since the previous inspection, including a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and staff morale is high. The senior leadership team conducts regular lesson observations and these help ensure that its own evaluation of the school's effectiveness is broadly accurate and that improvement plans identify the most important areas for development. However, targets set for year-on-year progress are not sufficiently

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ambitious to ensure that attainment rises to at least average. Leaders collect plenty of information about the progress pupils make. However, they do not always analyse and then act on their findings quickly enough to ensure that all barriers to learning are removed rapidly. The school's awareness of the impact of leadership at all levels is currently restricted because there is a focus on the actions taken, for example by subject leaders, rather than on the impact of their work. However, there is evidence of improving outcomes that demonstrate the positive impact of the new team. For example, attainment is rising at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, there is a clear trend of improvement in mathematics and in the proportions of pupils making expected progress. Taken together these gains demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to secure sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring staff:
 - use information they have about the pupils' earlier learning to set tasks that provide the right level of challenge for all pupils
 - deliver brisk lesson introductions that maintain pupils' engagement and leave sufficient time for them to practise and apply their skills
 - ask questions throughout lessons that require pupils to show their understanding.
- Raise attainment in writing by providing pupils with more opportunities to write on topics that motivate them and have a real purpose.
- Ensure that leaders and managers accelerate the pace of improvement by:
 - setting ambitious targets for pupils' progress
 - analysing information about pupils' progress swiftly to ensure that any barriers to learning are promptly identified and removed
 - establishing systems that hold leaders at all levels to account for the impact of their activities on pupils' achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Children enter the school with skills and knowledge well below those that are expected. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes but still enter Year 1 with skills in most areas that are below average. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is improving and in the last two years has been broadly average. Strategies such as 'Every Child a Reader' have increased the proportion of confident young readers.

The proportion of pupils who join the school during Key Stage 2 is higher than in most schools. School data on pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 show that pupils who are on roll from the beginning of Year 4 and earlier make satisfactory

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progress. However, because of their low starting points this rate of progress means that their attainment remains low. Factors preventing better progress include lesson introductions where all pupils, regardless of previous learning, practise the same skills. This occurred, for example, in a mathematics lesson where for 20 minutes the teacher led all pupils through the same multiplication problems despite their wide range of ability and earlier learning. Later in the lesson, the tasks set did match the pupils’ needs, but the introduction to the lesson added little to skills of pupils at either end of the ability range. Attainment in writing is lower than attainment in reading. However, the programme 'Every Child A Writer' is having some success in accelerating the progress of pupils at risk of underachievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same satisfactory progress as others. In some lessons skilful interventions, often from teaching assistants, successfully promote confidence and encourage pupils to work independently. However, in a small minority of lessons, the tasks set for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are too demanding and adults end up giving pupils the answers or writing up the pupils’ responses for them. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language receive targeted support, including from staff who are fluent in their first language, and make satisfactory progress.

The school is particularly successful at supporting the personal development of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and those with significant learning, medical and behavioural needs. The academic outcomes and attendance levels of looked after children are at least in line, and often above those of other groups. All pupils have satisfactory opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. They take on a number of responsibilities such as playground pals and librarians. Through discussions in lessons and in the school council, they are beginning to share their views about their learning and well-being. These roles contribute positively to the school’s friendly and purposeful atmosphere and the pupils’ good social and moral development. Pupils acquire a satisfactory awareness of healthy lifestyles, but many do not apply this knowledge at meal and snack times.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A small minority of teaching is good or outstanding. Common features of teaching in these lessons are excellent subject knowledge, imaginative resources and high expectations. For example, pupils made outstanding progress in an art lesson exploring how to use shading to give depth to their sketches. The teacher modelled correct technique, used primary sources to link the work to the topic on the Titanic and gave the pupils the responsibility for working collaboratively and deciding themselves when they were ready to move from using pencil to charcoal. Pupils of all abilities exuded enjoyment and involvement in the lesson. However, more typical were lessons where progress was satisfactory because the activities did not excite the pupils. In a few lessons, tasks were not explained clearly. When this occurred, a minority of pupils were unsure of what exactly they were expected to do and so waited for adult support before being able to start their work. Pupils' work is marked regularly; however, not all teachers add helpful comments that indicate how pupils can improve.

Starting this academic year the school has introduced a new topic-based curriculum. The aim is to provide learning experiences throughout the week that inspire pupils. Discussions with pupils confirmed considerable success, with pupils eager to tell of how they were following up topics at home by making models and researching on the internet. However, it is too early to judge how successfully the new curriculum is promoting higher basic skills and developing subject-specific knowledge and understanding. Well-established links with other schools through programmes such as the Black Country Challenge and the Royal Shakespeare Project contribute successfully to the pupils' enjoyment of school and their good social skills and cultural development. The high priority given to learning about Christianity and other faiths, particularly those represented in the school, supports the pupils' spiritual development effectively.

The school has well-organised and effective strategies for the care of all pupils. It is particularly effective in removing barriers to learning for pupils whose behaviour or low attendance make them potentially vulnerable. Pupils who join the school after the Early Years Foundation Stage, often because they have been very unsettled in other schools, settle well. They comment that because behaviour in the school is good, they feel safe and in turn behave well. Consequently, their attendance rates improve, and their academic progress in the school is at least satisfactory and in individual instances good. Case studies, including academic data, demonstrate the positive impact of strategies, led by the Learning Mentor, to support looked after children and accelerate their learning. The school has a strong reputation within the

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local authority for being highly effective in managing pupils with additional needs, especially those with behavioural difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the headteacher has enabled the school to make steady improvements. He has established a team ready to build on gains made since his appointment. Senior staff have played an important role in the school's development, especially in improving attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and mathematics. However, the dip in attainment in writing, the relatively low attainment of boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the satisfactory quality of teaching demonstrate that the current strategies for tackling weaker aspects of provision and outcomes lack the rigour necessary to achieve good and outstanding progress in all subjects and year groups.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. It has a helpful range of skills and experiences that enable it to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. Good systems are in place to ensure the safety of children, including appropriate recruitment procedures. Staff, including those recently appointed, are clear about the steps to take if they have a concern about a child's well-being. The school knows its pupils well and works effectively with other agencies when children are at risk. There are no shortcomings in the management of resources, but, because outcomes are inadequate, the school is not providing value for money.

The school's work on engagement with parents and carers has enabled it to achieve national accreditation and has helped improve attendance. However, a small minority of families remain reluctant to act as partners in their children's learning, for example, by attending meetings at school to review the progress their children are making. The care, guidance and support the pupils receive benefits from links with the Education Investigation Service and the local team of educational psychologists. Other partnerships, including links with local schools, contribute satisfactorily to the pupils' outcomes. Through its curriculum and displays, the school celebrates diversity and ensures that all ethnic groups within the school have opportunities to share their faiths and cultures. Pupils confirm that racist incidents are extremely rare and that if they occur, they are dealt with effectively. Tracking data show that all groups are making satisfactory progress and that all participate fully in the life of the school, including extra-curricular activities.

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The school is at the heart of the local community through its partnership with the church. This partnership and its links with schools in other localities and continents contribute to the pupils’ good cultural development. However, the school’s leaders recognise that at present its formal planning, monitoring and evaluation of its work to promote community cohesion, are satisfactory rather than good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Nevertheless, because of their low starting points, their attainment by the age of five is lower than expected in most areas. Boys’ attainment is lower than girls’ and this is now being addressed through topics, such as pirates, police and super heroes that appeal to boys and promote their communication skills more effectively.

The organisation of the setting successfully meets the needs of children. In the snack café, children from Reception and Nursery chat as they enjoy their fruit and drinks, while adults satisfactorily extend their language and social skills through timely interventions. Throughout the day children have access to the large well-equipped outdoor area, where they enjoy working together to make music and sing nursery rhymes, and to construct ramps with pipes to explore forces. Again, adults support learning satisfactorily during these activities. They encourage language development and early writing skills but some opportunities are lost. For example, children role-playing police officers had difficulty ‘taking notes’ because some pens were not working.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage provides satisfactory leadership and

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together with other staff has an appropriate understanding of the factors that enable young children to learn successfully. The team enjoys the respect of parents and carers. Careful induction arrangements, including home visits, enable children to settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage classes and help ensure that there is effective support for children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The tracking of children’s progress in the last academic year was more rigorous in the Nursery than in the Reception classes. This high quality tracking and assessment helped the leader evaluate and analyse all aspects of performance, and plan improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was average. The parents and carers who responded are extremely supportive of the school and are content with what the school provides. Inspection evidence confirms the views of the very large majority who say that the school keeps pupils safe and manages their behaviour well. There were written comments on just a few of the questionnaires. These too were overwhelmingly positive.

The inspection evidence did not endorse the overwhelmingly positive views of respondents regarding the quality of teaching, leadership and management or pupils’ progress. The report explains why the inspectors came to different judgements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Netherton CoFE 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 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 334 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	59	43	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	66	33	32	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	55	53	45	43	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	44	55	53	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	51	50	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	52	50	51	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	38	64	62	0	0	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)	43	41	54	52	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	46	44	58	56	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	49	44	42	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	34	62	60	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	38	61	59	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	56	54	46	44	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Netherton CofE Primary School, Dudley, DY2 0HU

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you all and hearing your thoughts about the school. These helped us to get to know your school better. We were impressed by your behaviour and friendliness, and by how well the staff ensure that you are safe and happy at school.

Although many parts of your school are satisfactory, and a few are good, we have had to give the school a 'notice to improve'. This is because the school has not done all that it should have to make sure you are gaining the skills in reading, writing and mathematics that will enable you to get off to a good start when you begin your secondary education.

We are confident that your headteacher and other staff will bring about the necessary improvements. We have asked them to ensure that there are many more good and outstanding lessons, where everyone is set work that offers just the right amount of challenge. We have also asked them to make sure that introductions to lessons are not too long and that you have more opportunities throughout the school day to write about topics that really interest you. Finally, we have asked your school's leaders to set ambitious targets for the progress you can make each year and to check carefully that all of their hard work is enabling you to meet these targets. Later this school year another inspector will visit Netherton to see how you are getting on.

You and your families can also help the school improve. We are pleased that attendance is improving and hope that this will continue. The school also provides you and your families with information about your learning targets. It will really help your progress if you talk with your families about your targets and see if they can help you achieve them.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

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