

Friarswood Primary School

Abbots Way, Westlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2ES

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From starting points that are broadly in line with those expected for their ages, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and achieve well, even though standards last year were affected by the school's temporary but lengthy closure.
- Some year groups have a well above average proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. This has an impact on attainment. Even so, these pupils generally make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are outstanding. Excellent attitudes towards learning are evident in all lessons.
- Teaching is good. Training for teachers is closely linked to appraisal and their individual needs. Teachers plan some very effective lessons that encourage pupils' active participation.
- Leadership and management are having a positive impact on teaching and achievement. The headteacher led the school well through very difficult circumstances last year. The leadership team have developed good systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring teaching and learning. The governing body have developed their effectiveness significantly since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although standards are improving, too few pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Recent changes to how teachers check on pupils' learning are not yet used enough in rapidly responding to any underachievement.
- Teachers' questioning does not always encourage all pupils to respond, and questions do not always challenge pupils enough or help the teacher check how effective their teaching has been.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to a number of pupils, listened to some read and looked closely at a wide sample of their work.
- Inspectors analysed and took account of the 37 responses of parents and carers to the online survey (Parent View), and 18 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at key documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, policies, performance information, procedures for safeguarding, and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Friarswood is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and a very small number of pupils are from a minority ethnic background.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average overall but very high in some year groups.
- Since the last inspection, the school has had a new headteacher and significant staff changes. In addition, the school was closed for a lengthy period in 2012 for medical and health reasons.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have a parent in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- All pupils are educated on site. The school does not use alternative provision to support any of its pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by:
 - ensuring that more of the most able pupils reach the higher levels
 - embedding recent changes to the way teachers use their knowledge of how well pupils are doing to identify and rapidly address any underachievement.
- Make more of the teaching outstanding by:
 - ensuring that pupils have time to respond to the new marking and feedback system and that teachers' comments are effective in helping pupils to know what they need to do to improve.
 - improving teachers' questioning so that all pupils have a chance to answer and teachers use these responses to check the effectiveness of their teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start in the Nursery class with levels of knowledge and understanding broadly in line with those typically found at this age. However the development of their communication and language skills is often below that expected. The consistently good teaching helps them to make good progress.
- Progress is good during the Reception Year. This was evident as children learned about different careers from visiting parents and from a dressing-up day when they drew and wrote about what they wanted to do when they grew up. Recent training for the Early Years Foundation Stage teachers on basic writing skills is already having a positive impact on progress, and is particularly effective in accelerating boys' learning. For example, they talked excitedly about how they enjoy using chalk to write on the ground.
- In the 2012 Year 1 reading check, the school was well above the national average. This is evident in the good reading skills and clear enjoyment of books among pupils in Years 1 and 2. The good achievement was the result of some very effective teaching.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 were badly affected by the lengthy school closure last year and were not as high as expected. Even so they still improved over previous years. Currently, in Years 1 and 2, progress is good in reading, writing and mathematics. While pupils make good progress overall, as is evident in their books, too few pupils are attaining the higher levels, especially in mathematics.
- Although standards in Year 6 were below average in 2012 most pupils, including those who found learning more difficult, made good progress from Year 3 to Year 6. A high proportion of those who were at the school throughout Key Stage 2 made better than expected progress. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to do much better this year although more remains to be done to help more of them reach the higher levels. However, in mathematics, staff are already seeking ways to extend the most able through better links with a local secondary school.
- In the past, the attainment of those known to be eligible for free school meals has been a long way below that of other pupils. However, over the last two years, the school has narrowed this gap significantly. This is as a result of the additional support these pupils receive, funded by the pupil premium, such as one-to-one tuition. Although still below the national average, all of the pupils who received the pupil premium in Year 6 last year made the expected or better progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are very well supported. There were no significant differences in the achievement of different groups, including the very small number from a minority ethnic background. The achievement of the pupils who are supported by the nurture staff is often outstanding due to the excellent care they receive.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Good teaching has been maintained through a difficult past year and a number of staffing changes. The teaching of linking sounds and letters is having a big impact on standards. Teaching has improved because the school has made good use of a wide range of training and professional development opportunities.

- The setting of targets for pupils was an issue for improvement at the last inspection. This is now good because it helps pupils to understand what they need to do to reach the next level in their learning. Recent changes to marking and methods of feeding back to pupils on their work are beginning to have a good impact but are yet to be fully and consistently applied.
- The tracking of pupils' learning has improved and regular meetings between subject leaders and teachers highlight individual pupils' needs well. Even so, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently stretched so that they reach the levels of which they are capable. The use of this information is at an early stage and has not been sufficiently embedded in teachers' everyday planning. Teachers' questioning does not always provide enough opportunities for quieter pupils to answer, nor is it always used to check on their understanding.
- A growing proportion of the teaching is outstanding. This occurs where the planning ensures that lessons are very active and all pupils are able to participate. In Year 1, for example, pupils were provided with excellent resources enabling them to handle and explore old toys as part of their history theme. The teacher continually checked on pupils' progress and their understanding of the task. This ensured that all were fully involved in excellent learning opportunities. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very strong and this has a very good impact on learning.
- Teaching assistants often provide very effective support to teachers and pupils. This is particularly the case when working with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards learning in lessons. In Year 5, for example, pupils' relationships with each other were very mature and this had a very positive impact on their learning because they tried ideas out on each other and supported each other's learning well.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is excellent and they are extremely polite and thoughtful towards others.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils say they feel safe at school, and this is supported by the views of parents and carers. Older pupils say bullying is non-existent but that if it occurred they are confident it would be well dealt with. They trust the adults and would share any concerns or worries with them. They talked knowledgeably about the use of computers and how to stay safe when accessing the internet.
- Parents and carers say their children enjoy coming to school. This was supported by discussions held with pupils. They say how well teachers help them learn. They praised the way teachers help them with any problems. They also enjoy taking responsibility, such as being a member of the school council. This showed the pupils' extremely caring natures as they suggested giving money to a local cancer charity ahead of spending on any school resources.
- Pupils who find behaving well more challenging are well provided for through the nurture group, a very caring staff and clear records of any incidents. The links with parents are effective and appreciated by the parents. This helps these pupils make at least good progress because they are so settled.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school very effectively through a difficult period when a lengthy school closure was the result of medical and health issues, and through a time of significant staffing changes. She has worked with senior staff and governors to minimise the impact of these changes, especially the closure. This has also meant working closely with many families and arranging home tuition on their behalf.
- Senior leaders are clear about their roles. There are effective and regularly used systems for monitoring subjects through observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, evaluating teachers' planning and talking to pupils.
- The local authority has provided the school with good support. The headteacher has had useful input to develop her skills in observing and monitoring the work of teachers. Other training and regular visits have supported staff and helped new teachers to settle in well. These visits help maintain a focus on standards and check that the school continues to have a good capacity to improve.
- The use of performance information in tracking pupils' progress is good. Even so, further improvements to the system are being investigated to ensure its effectiveness in helping to rapidly address any underperformance. Outcomes are discussed at regular meetings between teachers and senior staff and there is very effective targeting of pupils to work in small groups or to receive individual one-to-one work.
- On its website, the school provides some good information for parents and carers about the use of the money available through the pupil premium. The inspection evidence shows that the spending is effective and having a positive impact on these pupils' good progress. It is used well to support these pupils access to out-of-school and enrichment activities, for example.
- The management of teachers' performance has been used successfully to identify strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education provided. Over time, weaker teaching has been effectively dealt with so that pupils benefit from good teaching. Training for teachers who have gaps in their experience or knowledge is used well to ensure that more of the teaching is at least good and a growing amount is outstanding. Challenging targets are set for teachers, mainly based on raising standards.
- The school's planning ensures a number of very effective links between subjects. For example, during the inspection, the linking of history and literacy, and mathematics, information and communication technology and geography were all evident. Good enrichment activities support pupils' interests well. Year 5 and 6 visited a local college during the inspection to carry out a range of art and design activities which they talked about with genuine interest and pleasure when they returned. The school makes sure that all pupils have equal access to all activities and does not tolerate any discrimination.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has worked hard since the last inspection to improve its ability to support and challenge the school. It now does this effectively. Governors question leaders about their work and closely analyse the data about pupil progress. They have developed the work of the curriculum committee very effectively and this is now providing a good level of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. For example, governors recently visited the school to interview pupils about the new marking and feedback system to see how well it was understood and being used. This resulted in a high-quality written report for the other governors. In addition, governors have a clear picture of the work being done to improve

teaching quality and of its success through better progress. They understand how targets are set for teachers and how the school deals with any underperformance. Governors ensure that salary increases are linked to the progress made by pupils and to good or better teaching. They have made good decisions over the spending of the pupil premium, especially through the development of the nurture provision. The impact of spending is checked carefully against the outcomes achieved to ensure best use of this funding. The governing body makes sure that all statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124109
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	403545

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Kay
Headteacher	Lindsey Wilmer
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
Telephone number	01782 297345
Fax number	01782 297486
Email address	office@friarswood.staffs.sch.uk;

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