

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124381
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281707
Inspection dates 7 November 2005 to 7 November 2005
Reporting inspector Roger SadlerRISP

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000
School address	Ipstones Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST10 2LY
Telephone number	01538 266292
Fax number	01538 266093
Chair of governors	Rev C Scargill
Headteacher	Mr Roger Whittaker

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. All pupils are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. When children start in Reception they have average skills overall with above average skills in language and communication. An average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Long-term absence and a failure to recruit a permanent headteacher have led to unsettled and uncertain leadership during the last year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Children make less progress in the Foundation Stage than they are capable of because of inadequacies in the quality of education. Through the rest of the school many pupils fail to reach their potential and make unsatisfactory progress, especially in writing and mathematics. The progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is also too slow. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are satisfactory with some good features in the ways that they understand and adopt aspects of a healthy lifestyle and also contribute to the community.

Provision, including the curriculum and the way that pupils are cared for and guided, is inadequate. Teaching lacks the challenge necessary to ensure all pupils make enough progress in their learning. Teachers work hard and show great dedication to pupils but they have lacked guidance, support and development. Leadership and management are inadequate. Although senior and temporary leaders have introduced some useful improvements, the long-term lack of stability and effective leadership have left standards and the quality of education declining and staff unsupported. Pupils' progress is not effectively monitored and important statutory duties, procedures and training have not been carried out fully. These require urgent attention.

Planning for school improvement is inadequate. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money. Before the inspection the school had over-generously judged its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory, but recognised its weaknesses in standards, and leadership and management. Leaders do not accept that special measures are required to bring about the necessary improvement.

Grade: 4

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

What the school should do to improve further

- monitor pupils' progress and ensure they achieve the standards of which they are capable
- improve the ways in which the school examines its own work and the quality of its provision
- help teachers increase the challenge in the work set for pupils

Achievement and standards

Throughout the school pupils make inadequate progress and many do not achieve their potential. Children enter Reception with average skills but many make less progress than would be expected because teaching is not demanding enough. This pattern continues in other years and many pupils do not achieve enough in basic skills such as writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, although most pupils reach the nationally expected level, too few reach the higher levels of which they are capable. By the end of Year 4, many pupils are clearly underachieving. The presentation of work is often below average and the quantity and quality of writing are less than expected. Spelling and punctuation are below average. Letter sounds are successfully taught in Years 1 and 2 and this helps pupils read unfamiliar words. In mathematics, knowledge of basic number facts such as multiplication tables is below average and this limits pupils' ability to apply such skills to other mathematics work.

Although some recent improvements have been made in how the school assesses pupils with additional learning needs, they make insufficient progress in all year groups. The school lacks an effective system for assessing the progress that pupils make and targeting what they should achieve as they grow older.

Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance has improved recently to good levels. Social and moral development is satisfactory. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They usually relate well to each other and work happily and safely together. Behaviour is satisfactory although even better behaviour could be expected in classes. The determined work of teaching and support staff has sustained satisfactory behaviour through difficult times when there was no substantive headteacher. Most pupils concentrate well, show good attitudes to their learning and enjoy lessons. However, when they are required to listen for a long time or when the work is not well matched to their capabilities, they become bored and distracted. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory and interesting 'activity days' have improved pupils' understanding of different cultures. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community and talk with enthusiasm about their responsibilities. A school council is now being organised and pupils feel that they are listened to and their views respected. Although pupils are able to cooperate, weaknesses in provision for basic skills and information and communication technology (ICT) limit pupils' preparation for contributing to their future economic well-being.

The school promotes healthy eating and physical exercise well and pupils show good understanding of the key requirements of a healthy and safe lifestyle. Children speak positively about the need to eat healthily, their exciting physical education lessons and out-of-school clubs.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Although teachers and support staff are dedicated and work hard, their support and training have been neglected and important weaknesses in the quality of teaching are unrecognised and unaddressed by leaders. In the Foundation Stage, understanding of how very young children learn and the necessary balance of adult support to ensure learning are lacking. Questioning skills do not challenge the most able and children are not moved on quickly enough. In Reception, activities are not effectively planned to meet the needs of those with learning disabilities and activities occupy children rather than encouraging them to acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding.

Although teachers have recently come together to improve assessment, its use in classes remains unsatisfactory. Teachers mark work diligently but comments in books mostly lack challenge and too often consist of general comments, such as 'good work' or 'well done,' rather than pointing pupils to exactly where they need to improve. Feedback during and at the end of lessons lacks challenge and modest efforts and underachievement are accepted with applause. Low expectations hinder the progress many pupils might make, particularly in mathematics and writing, and this also helps to explain why so few pupils attain the higher levels in tests.

One class has an interactive whiteboard. The teacher is beginning to use this effectively and the pupils enjoyed using it to look at number clusters and multiplication. However, insufficient resources and staff training mean that chances to use ICT are lacking and this spoils pupils' enjoyment and learning.

Grade: 4

Curriculum and other activities

The curriculum is inadequate. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage does not meet the children's wide range of needs and does not offer children enough opportunities to explore, experiment, be creative and make decisions for themselves. Staff have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Although provision for subjects such as art and physical education is good in Years 1 to 4, there are weaknesses in provision for basic skills, especially mathematics, writing, and information and communication technology. The curriculum often does not meet the needs of higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, and, although the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has improved, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently well matched to these pupils' needs. Education for health is good. The staff show strong commitment to providing a good range of extra activities including after-school clubs, special activity days and performances. However, there is a lack of emphasis on developing basic skills to ensure that pupils are ready for the next stage of education and to contribute to their future economic well-being.

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support

The school does not provide adequate systems to ensure its pupils are properly cared for. The school offers a very attractive learning environment and staff have good, supportive relationships with pupils and work hard to help them enjoy school. However systems for safeguarding pupils are lacking. Child protection and risk assessments, including those for visits, are inadequate and staff have not received the training they need. The lack of systems to monitor pupils' progress is a key factor in explaining their underachievement. Although teachers are beginning to identify targets for learning, pupils show limited knowledge of these and they have not yet influenced their progress. Pupils' progress through the school is inadequately monitored and this means that the school as a whole lacks a clear view of how well individuals and groups of pupils are learning or whether or not each is achieving his or her potential. Consequently, resources and attention are not accurately targeted on addressing underachievement. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has improved substantially but there has not been time for this to have an effect on pupils' progress. The school works well with parents, who are generally supportive of the work of the staff. However, parents are rightly concerned about the lack of consistent leadership in the school.

Grade: 4

Leadership and management

A lack of long-term stability and certainty in the senior leadership of the school has allowed standards and the quality of education to decline unchecked. The school has recently developed better ways of discovering the views of parents and pupils but monitoring and evaluation are weak. Improvement planning is unsatisfactory. Although the most recent plan focuses on improving important aspects, it lacks a detailed timetable for action and does not identify clear ways to measure success. Subject leaders have a sound understanding of their role, but they have been given insufficient support and guidance on how to carry it out effectively. For example, they have not been trained in how to analyse data to evaluate their work. The school lacks the capacity to address its most important weaknesses and bring about necessary improvements.

The school's leaders and the governing body have not given sufficient attention to ensuring that statutory requirements are met. There are important gaps, such as risk assessment and child protection procedures and training. Arrangements to manage the teachers' performance have barely begun and this means that they lack direction, guidance and support for their work.

Insufficient attention is given to leading the Foundation Stage and knowledge and understanding of how to improve provision and drive up standards are lacking. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities has been neglected. Although statutory requirements are now met, recent improvements have not yet led to these pupils making better progress. A lack of leadership of ICT means that materials and equipment are inadequate, staff have not been trained and opportunities to use this valuable resource are often missed.

Grade: 4

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate		School Overall	16-19
Overall effectiveness			
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4		NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3		NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	4		NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4		NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No		NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No		NA
Achievement and standards			
How well do learners achieve?	4		NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4		NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4		NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4		NA
¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.			
Personal development and well-being			
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3		NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3		NA
The behaviour of learners	3		NA
The attendance of learners	2		NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3		NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3		NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2		NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2		NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4		NA
The quality of provision			
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4		NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4		NA

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	NA
Leadership and management		
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA
The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy		
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily		Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise		Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse		Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health		Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe		
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements		No
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place		No
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism		Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them		Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution		
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships		Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them		Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community		Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being		
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills		Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams		Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form		NA
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy		NA

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The Children St Leonards' CofE (A) Primary School, Brookfields Road, Ipstones, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST10 2LY

8 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so friendly and helpful.

What we liked most about your school:

- you attend school well.
- you mostly concentrate in lessons.
- we are pleased that you are learning how to lead healthy lives.
- we see that you try to help others outside the school.
- we think that your teachers work very hard.
- most of your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

We think your school needs extra help and checks to ensure it can get better. We think it should concentrate on:

- checking your progress so that you all do your very best
- finding out what the school does well and where improvements are needed
- helping your teachers make sure that work is hard enough for you all
- making sure that all the things the school is responsible for are carried out fully, such as making sure that you and the school are safe at all times.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Sadler Lead Inspector

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