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Inspection Report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 116658
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279867
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Martin Kerly RISP

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

Type of school	First	School address	Gibb Lane
School category	Community		Catshill
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 0JP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 872913
Number on roll	290	Fax number	01527 570873
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Neil Bennett
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Melanie Henderson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school has a nursery offering part-time provision, and 10 classes. Numbers recently declined as a result of external factors but have now stabilised. Pupils come from Catshill, a large suburban village near Bromsgrove, a significant proportion of whom are from areas of socio-economic deprivation.

The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is increasing and is above the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British families with only a very few from minority ethnic groups. None speak English as an additional language.

The school was recently awarded Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has many strengths and few areas needing improvement. It gives good value for money. The effective systems for evaluating its performance provide it with a clear and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and overall effectiveness. Attainment is below national expectations on entry to the school. Good overall achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4 enables pupils by the end of Years 2 and 4 to attain standards above the national average, except in writing, which is below expectations in Year 4. Pupils' personal development is good. Much teaching is good but overall it is satisfactory as there is some inconsistency following recent substantial changes to the teaching team. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities but there is insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT). There are also insufficient opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of Britain's cultural diversity. All pupils are cared for and supported well by the entire staff team.

The leadership of the headteacher and her deputy, and the commitment to raising standards, are the most significant factors leading to pupils' good progress. The school is well placed to continue the good improvement since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by the end of Year 4 by matching the work more closely to pupils' abilities and needs.
- Make better use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Develop pupils' awareness and understanding of Britain's culturally diverse society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many children enter the Nursery with abilities below national expectations in a wide range of skills, particularly the boys. This is especially so in language skills, and personal, social and physical development. Children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress from their low starting point so that by the end of Reception the majority reach national expectations in most aspects of their work. The exception is in literacy where despite improvements made it is not enough to reach national expectations.

For the last three years, standards by the end of Year 2 have been rising consistently in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and test results in 2005 were above the 2004 national average in reading, mathematics and science and broadly average for writing. This represents substantial progress. Standards by the end of Year 4 show continuing good overall achievement except in writing. Pupils currently in Years 2 and 4 are on track to maintain these above average standards in next year's tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and physical disabilities make good overall progress as a result of good provision carefully matched to their needs.

The school's data and inspection evidence show that pupils of all abilities achieve well during their time at the school from low starting points. Standards are now much better than at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils achieve the realistically challenging targets set and a small proportion exceed them. Writing has improved but the school is aware that too many pupils did not meet demanding targets set in writing in Years 3 and 4 last year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, remains good. Their awareness and understanding of cultural diversity, whilst satisfactory, is not fully developed. The school works effectively to improve attendance which is now satisfactory.

The staff team successfully contributes to the effective programme for personal development. Pupils have positive attitudes, behave very well in class and around the school, for example when moving for assembly, and clearly enjoy all aspects of school life. They demonstrate respect and care for each other, helping vulnerable pupils to feel confident members of the community. They take care of their environment and are proud of their contributions in the sensory garden. Pupils become involved in local activities, for example harvest festival donations, and international fund raising appeals. Many are given roles as monitors, greeting visitors and caring for younger children, which they take seriously and fulfil well. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily, walk to school and take part in various sporting activities. Pupils make good progress in the development of most key skills needed when they are older and further improvements are targeted in writing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has convincing evidence demonstrating overall good teaching last year, which had a significant impact on standards. Major changes of staff this term, some temporary, mean the current team is less experienced, with four teachers in their first year of teaching, and some temporary and supply teachers. Senior managers are providing effective support to specific teachers where required.

Much of the teaching remains good but it is satisfactory overall because of some inconsistencies within and between years. Most teachers plan well with high expectations, and explain clearly to pupils what they will be learning. However there are examples in the teaching of writing where work is not planned well enough to meet the needs of different ability groups.

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 4. Here pupils are learning well and are on track to achieve well by the end of the year. Teachers establish good relationships and a good learning ethos enabling pupils to settle and concentrate.

Teaching assistants, some with specialist skills, make a really good contribution to teaching and learning. They frequently work with pupils with learning difficulties contributing to their good learning, and also contribute very well in subjects such as art and ICT.

Assessment is good in the Foundation Stage. Comprehensive assessment procedures are used satisfactorily in Years 1 to 4, but there is scope for better feedback to pupils, increasing their understanding of how to improve, particularly their writing, and by setting short-term writing targets, which they can regularly practise and review.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has many strengths. There have been good improvements since the last inspection particularly in science and art. However, there is a need to improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers and pupils across the curriculum. There are insufficient interactive whiteboards and the ICT suite is underused. An additional minor weakness is provision for geography, with insufficient clarity about the progression of skills.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned well. In Years 1 to 4 there is sound coverage of the National Curriculum. Provision for personal and social development is good. Numerous visits by pupils and visitors to the school successfully enrich the curriculum. The residential visit by Year 4 pupils during the inspection is an excellent feature and inspires pupils. With the exception of the sensory garden, which is used imaginatively, other outdoor areas contribute relatively little. Growing links with a local upper school are strengthening sporting experiences, and the school has a good range of clubs and activities, including French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff members are involved in ensuring the school is a safe and caring place for pupils. This is fully endorsed by parents responding to the inspector's survey and by the pupils who feel secure and know who to approach with a problem. Child protection procedures are exemplary and regularly reviewed. Staff training for this, and such things as first-aid, is given high priority. There are very good training opportunities for parents, for example the parenting and numeracy courses.

The school has exceptionally detailed data, recording pupils' academic progress and personal development, and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. However, this information is not fully used to set short-term targets so that pupils know how to improve key skills such as writing. The support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and physical disabilities is particularly good with effective links with outside agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides particularly good leadership and is supported very effectively by the deputy. During her three years in post, standards, provision and staff morale have improved significantly as a result of her clear vision, high expectations of all and exceptional work rate. Together, the headteacher and deputy are carrying a very heavy workload well during the temporary reduction in size of the leadership team. Governors are planning to extend this team to share responsibilities more widely. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and physical disabilities is very well co-ordinated by the deputy. Most subjects are led well but staff changes have caused some delays in implementing plans, for example in geography.

Almost all aspects of the school are managed well. There are good systems for monitoring the performance and checking the impact of changes, and excellent data, tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. These help provide the school with a clear and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Parents are regularly consulted and feel informed. A new security fence was erected following consultation. The quality of school meals is under discussion following parents' response to questionnaires.

The good improvement planning process ensures that priorities are relevant and understood. For example the school, which has high expectations, is quite right in targeting further improvement in writing to match standards achieved by pupils in their other work. Governors are committed and work conscientiously to support the school but do not yet provide enough challenge to hold the school to account. The headteacher ensures they are well informed. The very new chair already has a good grasp of the role.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you probably remember a team of three inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work.

I am pleased to say that, for lots of reasons, we decided that Catshill School is a good school. Here are some of the most important things we found to be good:

- You work hard and make good progress in your lessons.
- You behave well and care well for each other and things around your school.
- The teachers and other members of staff provide lots of extra activities for you and arrange trips and visits.
- Everyone helps to look after you and make sure you are safe and well cared for.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher work very hard indeed to make sure the school keeps getting better.

We have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to work together to improve three things:

- To help you improve the quality of your writing by the time you leave the school.
- To make sure you can use information and communication technology (ICT) in more of your lessons.
- To help you learn more about the many different groups of people who live in our country.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. We hope that you carry on enjoying your learning and helping each other.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Usher-Clark, Ian Hancock and Martin Kerly Inspectors