



Smallthorne Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123987
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281600
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Christine Huard AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chetwynd Street
School category	Community		Smallthorne
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 1PR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 235265
Number on roll	222	Fax number	01782 235266
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Richard Grigson
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Pat Broadley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school in a suburb of Stoke-on-Trent. Nearly all the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Children enter the school with very poor social, language and mathematical skills and overall attainment on entry is low. The school has recently moved into a new building, which has considerably improved the teaching and learning environment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, although attendance is still below average. All pupils achieve well. Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. Children enter the nursery with very limited personal, communication and mathematical skills and make good progress from their low starting point as they move through the school. They leave Year 6 having attained standards that are average in English, and above average in mathematics and science. Standards in writing are weaker than those in reading, and actions taken to improve this are beginning to have a positive impact. Teaching is good and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, learn effectively and achieve well. This is because their progress is closely monitored, support is provided where needed and lessons are made interesting so that they enjoy them. Attendance is below average. However, this is because of the poor attendance of children from a very few families and does not reflect the attitudes of the great majority of pupils who enthusiastically take part in the activities provided, both in and out of school hours. The leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent direction in driving the school forward. The senior management team and subject leaders ensure that the quest for high standards is rigorously pursued whilst instilling in the pupils a real enjoyment of learning. The governors are very supportive of the school but, because there are many new governors, they do not yet have full understanding of the school's performance. The school is very well placed to make further improvements and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills.
- Ensure all governors have a secure knowledge of their role in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Continue to work with the families of pupils whose attendance is too irregular.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils make good progress. When children enter the nursery they have few of the skills expected for children of this age and standards are low. They progress well in the nursery and reception classes, although by Year 1 most pupils still do not have all the skills expected in mathematics and English. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are average in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress because basic skills in mathematics and English are built on effectively, thus providing a strong foundation for more complex work later in school. Good progress continues through Years 3 to 6. At the end of Year 6, standards reached in mathematics and science are above average and they are broadly average in English. The school's own analysis shows that standards in writing are not as high as in reading.

It is taking positive action to remedy this weakness by building in good opportunities for writing across the curriculum. As a result, pupils' writing is already beginning to show some improvement, although more still needs to be done. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because they are provided with good support in the classroom and in small groups. The school met the challenging targets it set in 2005 and has set appropriately challenging targets for the coming year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school and enthusiastically join in the activities on offer. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Year 6 pupils said 'we cannot afford to behave badly, because we are the role models for the younger children'. Children in the nursery and reception classes make good progress in developing the personal and social skills they need in class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are opportunities to reflect in the lively assemblies and pupils understand messages such as 'love has to be shared'. Pupils have a good awareness of other beliefs and cultures through links with other schools in Europe and Africa. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend regularly; however, a small number of families do not take the need for regular attendance at school seriously enough. The staff work closely with these families, and attendance and punctuality are improving. Pupils know the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe. They know what is good to eat, and understand the benefits of regular exercise. Pupils have a voice in school affairs during circle times and through 'sharing' and 'good deed' boxes. They understand their responsibilities to each other in school and in the wider community and enjoy raising funds for charities such as Children in Need. Pupils' good social skills, increasing competence in literacy and numeracy, and developing confidence are preparing them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching for children in the nursery and reception classes is good and planning shows a keen awareness of the needs of individual children. Throughout the school, planning is comprehensive and includes tasks that challenge the higher attainers as well as providing appropriate support for those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Lessons have considerable strengths: they are well organised; the good use of high quality resources ensures the pupils' interest and helps them to learn effectively; explanations are clear; and questions are generally used well to challenge and motivate the pupils. However, in a few lessons, the work is led too much by the teacher, which means that pupils have fewer chances to work independently. Pupils learn effectively because tasks enthuse and inspire them and as a result they work hard. Older pupils speak enthusiastically of lessons being interesting and exciting and younger pupils respond very well to practical activities,

such as using plasticine in science to demonstrate forces. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support for the pupils. Marking by teachers is constructive and pupils explained clearly how assessing their own work helps them understand how to improve it further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the interests and needs of all its pupils, including those in the nursery and reception classes. There is a clear focus on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Activities are planned to match pupils' attainment so that they make effective progress. The school has made good progress in planning writing opportunities across a range of subjects in order to raise standards in English and this is beginning to have some impact on standards, although there is still more to do. There is a good programme for pupils' personal development, including sex and drugs education, which demonstrates how pupils can stay healthy and safe. There is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities enabling them to achieve well. The school makes work relevant for the pupils by incorporating a range of visits and visitors into topics. The curriculum is further enhanced by an inspiring range of extra curricular activities all of which help pupils gain additional skills, particularly in music and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's commitment to the care and well-being of its learners is outstanding. The school takes very good care of its pupils and keeps them all safe. Pupils feel happy and secure in school, which enables them to make good progress. Very good child protection procedures are in place and all staff are conversant with these. There is strong commitment to building up good relationships and as a result pupils know they can confide in adults. Attendance is closely monitored and, as a result, is improving. Teachers monitor the pupils' personal and academic progress rigorously. Marking is constructive. Year 2 pupils like the way 'the teacher writes in what you need to practise'. Older pupils understand their targets and what they need to do to make progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are monitored and supported very well and the school works closely with parents and other agencies in order for them to gain skills and confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and the senior management team ensure the school has clear direction and there is a strong commitment to raising standards. The school wants to 'make a difference' for its pupils and it is succeeding. This is because there have been good improvements to the monitoring and target tracking systems, and there is a thorough analysis and evaluation of its work throughout

the school – from the Foundation Stage up. All staff with management responsibilities rigorously monitor the effectiveness of their subjects and areas. Governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory duties. They are strongly led by a chairman who is knowledgeable and fully involved in all decision making. However, some new governors do not have the same understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are not yet fully involved in strategic planning, which means that responsibilities are not sufficiently shared. Pupils achieve well because there is robust monitoring of planning, lessons and pupils' work in order to ensure the quality of teaching and learning remains good. The high quality school development plan demonstrates that the school knows how well it is doing. Data are used well to check its own performance. For example, mental mathematics was identified as a concern and the success of actions taken is evident in the progress made by the pupils. Strategies to improve writing are also beginning to have a positive impact, although more needs to be done. The good improvement in the past and the good effectiveness of leadership and management indicate that there is very good capacity for further improvement. The school listens carefully to the views of parents and pupils and takes action to respond to their concerns where appropriate.

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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	1	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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

Dear Pupils Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities you are involved in. We found a lot of good things in school. • You, and your parents, told us very clearly how much you enjoy school and that you learn a lot; you also told us how much you enjoyed all the extra activities such as music and drama. • You make good progress with your learning and reach good standards in mathematics and science. • You are taught well and your lessons are interesting, which means that you pay attention, behave well and really enjoy your learning. • The school takes very good care of you and helps you become more confident. • Your school is well led and managed. Three things could be even better: • You need to have more opportunities to practise your writing in all subjects. • A few of you need to attend school more regularly. • Governors need to check more thoroughly how well you are learning. We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard. With very best wishes Mrs Christine Huard Lead Inspector Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T 0207 421 6800 F 0207 421 6707 www.ofsted.gov.uk