



Blurton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124002
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281602
Inspection dates 16 May 2006 to 17 May 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	Poplar Drive
School category	Community		Blurton
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 3AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 235025
Number on roll	246	Fax number	01782 235026
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	11 March 2002	Headteacher	Ms Julia Luke

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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 special educational needs is high. Children enter the school with low levels of attainment in literacy, mathematics and personal development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which has many good features. Although many improvements have been made in the last two years, inspectors are unable to agree with the school's judgement of its overall performance as good, because pupils' achievement is currently satisfactory and capable of improvement. Children enter the Nursery with low personal, communication and mathematical skills and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 but still leave Year 6 with below average standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' attitudes are good and most pupils participate enthusiastically in the activities provided, both in and out of school hours. However, there is still poor attendance by children from a few families. Teaching is satisfactory overall and much practice is good. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they receive good support. However, higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and this is reflected in the lower than average percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels in national tests.

The leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide clear direction in driving the school forward to achieve higher standards which they recognise to be necessary. The governors are very supportive of the school but, because many are new, they do not yet have full understanding of how well the school is performing. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues from the last inspection. It is well placed to make further improvements and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide greater challenge for higher-attaining pupils in lessons in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Strengthen governors' knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their role in monitoring performance.
- Continue to work with the families of pupils whose attendance is too irregular.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although standards are below average at the end of Year 6, achievement is satisfactory overall when taking into account pupils' low standards when they start at the school. Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and achieve well, although by Year 1 most children have not acquired the skills expected in mathematics and English. In Key Stage 1, pupils achieve satisfactorily, but despite improvements over the last two years, standards are below those expected in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily throughout Key Stage 2 but leave at the end of Year 6 with below average standards in English, mathematics and science.

Although standards are not high enough the upturn which has been a feature of recent years owes much to the improved tracking of pupils' progress. This has been particularly successful for lower attainers but less so for higher attainers. Consequently few pupils reach the higher levels in national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they are provided with consistently good support. The school did not meet the targets it set in 2005, but looks better placed to achieve the challenging targets it has set for the coming year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attitudes are good in lessons and often very good when stimulated by games, competitions or practical activities. Pupils enjoy school and take pride in their achievements and in the good quality displays of their work around the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved because they now have a good awareness of other faiths and cultures. Good behaviour reflects the consistent expectations and routines adopted by staff. Involving pupils in drawing up school rules has encouraged their commitment to improving behaviour. The number of exclusions remains low. Attendance is below average, despite the school's best efforts to improve, as the poor attendance by children from a small number of families lowers the overall figures. As a result of working closely with such families the situation is beginning to improve both for attendance and punctuality. Pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe. Healthy eating has a high priority in school. Pupils participate enthusiastically in exercise and 'take 10' sessions and have also been instrumental in setting up and managing a fruit stall in Key Stage 2. They understand why unhealthy snacks and 'fizzy pop' are no longer available in the school. Pupils' good social skills, their improving competence in literacy and numeracy, and growing confidence are preparing them satisfactorily for the future. They are fully involved in the life of the school, and willingly take on significant responsibilities as playground leaders, mediators and school council members and in deciding how the budget allocated to the council shall be spent. They recognise their responsibilities to the wider community through fund raising activities for charities and have an important say in deciding which charities will benefit.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and has many good features. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good and activities show a good awareness of the needs of individual children. Lessons are well organised and most teachers confidently use the interactive whiteboards to motivate the pupils and sustain their interest. Questions are often framed well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills but are not always sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. Planning

for pupils with learning difficulties is comprehensive and good support ensures that they make good progress but higher attainers are not as well served.

The most interesting lessons encourage reflection and some mature thinking. For example, pupils in Year 6 thoughtfully recalled how a lesson about Martin Luther King made them realise how important it was to have goals in life. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support for the pupils. Marking is constructive and pupils say it helps them understand what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and includes many exciting topics to hold pupils' interest. Provision in the Foundation Stage is well planned to give children a good start.

There is a clear focus on tackling the weaknesses in pupils' skills on entry. Recent good initiatives include a project on practical mathematics in order to develop problem solving skills and focus days on the lives and religions of other cultures, which broaden pupils' experiences. 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 a very good range of after school clubs, and school sports teams perform well in competitions. An annual theatre trip provides an invaluable experience for pupils which they may not experience otherwise.

Whilst most pupils are generally well catered for the curriculum is not planned well enough to ensure higher attainers are always set work which stretches and challenges them consistently.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The support, care and guidance and promotion of the pupils' health and safety are good features of the school. All adults give high priority to boosting pupils' self-confidence and rewarding success. The additional support for pupils with serious learning difficulties and personal problems is an excellent feature, using the skills of trained teachers, assistants and learning mentors. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures. Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to turn to in need. The reason why the tracking of pupils' progress has been more effective for lower attainers than higher attainers lies in the quality of follow up action. Groups of lower attainers who are underachieving are picked out for special attention and support and are set targets which are monitored and help in raising standards. There has not been the same focus on the needs of higher attainers, or such good follow up action when weaknesses are unearthed. The way the school has started to involve parents and grandparents in sampling lunchtime menus is good practice, and helps in reinforcing the importance of the support of families in encouraging healthy diets for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and the senior management team provide strong leadership and have played a key role in bringing about an improving trend in standards in the last two years. Their commitment to on-going improvement is shared by all members of the school community. As a result, a stimulating learning environment has been created which inspires all pupils to want to learn. The governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory duties. However, they do not monitor the school's performance robustly enough and because most are new to the role they do not have a sufficiently good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The staff mostly use data well to check the school's performance. For example, an Early Reading Development Programme has been successfully introduced in the Foundation Stage to help to improve weaknesses identified in pupils' reading and writing. The monitoring of lessons and pupils' work is rigorous. The headteacher through her recent observations of lessons has correctly identified that provision and support for higher attainers is not as good as for other pupils. There is a determination to address such weaknesses. The school takes action to listen to parents and address their concerns, for example by giving clearer information about homework and when it is set. Parents have confidence in the school and many comment favourably about improvements made.

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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?	3	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	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	2	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?	3	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	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

As you know, we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time there and would like to thank you for all the help you gave us. From talking to you we know how much you enjoy being at Blurton Primary. We thought you would like to know what we thought about your school.

What we think your school does well:

Those of you who find work difficult receive good support in lessons.

You behave well and are really keen to learn.

Most of you take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.

The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.

The headteacher and staff work hard to help you achieve as well as you can.

What we have asked the school to do to improve:

We think that those of you who are more able, need to have more challenge in lessons.

A few of you need to attend school more regularly.

The governors need to check more thoroughly how well you are learning.

Very best wishes

Christine Huard Lead Inspector