



Crackley Bank Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124108
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281635
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Christine Field RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chesterton
School category	Community		Newcastle
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Staffordshire ST5 7BE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 561760
Number on roll	185	Fax number	01782 562742
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sara Stevenson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average school serves a very disadvantaged community. When children start school in nursery their skills and knowledge are low, particularly in communication, language and literacy. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and over a third have learning difficulties or disabilities; two have statements. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the start of term is high. A new headteacher was appointed this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Crackley Bank Primary is a happy and very caring school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. The school has made sound improvement since its last inspection. The school's evaluation of its provision and inspectors' findings are in agreement. Parents hold positive views about the school but very few are involved as partners in education. However, the school is working successfully to get more parents on board, for example through their involvement in weekly family literacy sessions.

From low beginnings, children in the Nursery and Reception classes receive a good start to their education and make good progress even though the standards they reach when they transfer to Year 1 are well below those expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards here are well below average but improving because of the school's effective strategies. Currently, standards are better in English than mathematics and the school recognises that more work is required to enable pupils to develop their problem-solving skills. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. Much of the teaching engages and motivates pupils effectively. Teaching is particularly effective in meeting the needs of lower attainers but this is not always the case for higher attainers. Teaching in the lower junior years, though broadly satisfactory, has key shortcomings that prevent good progress. Additionally, high staff absences here are disrupting some pupils' learning.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The new headteacher has ensured that good plans are in place for moving the school forward during her imminent maternity leave, with the acting deputy and middle leaders willing and able to continue to push ahead with raising standards. The involvement of governors, parents and pupils in the school's self-evaluation process is developing. The school has secure capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve expectations, pace and challenge in teaching for lower juniors.
- Press ahead with implementing the good action plan for raising standards in mathematics, and sharpen target setting, marking and pupil self-review.
- Give particular focus to ensuring that work is well matched to all pupils' needs, especially higher attainers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception, although the standards they reach are well below the level expected for their age.

Standards in Years 1 to 6 are well below average but moving in the right direction due to the effective intensified support programme being implemented by school leaders with help from the local education authority. Most pupils make good progress in

English and satisfactory progress in mathematics, with boys and girls achieving about the same. The good focus on improving writing skills has resulted in a 16% increase in the most recent national test results. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved from a well below average level to a satisfactory level since the last inspection.

Progress quickens in the early years and later years of school because of better teaching and learning. In the lower juniors, pupils work at a steady pace but some could be achieving better if more was expected of them. Lower attaining pupils, many of whom have learning difficulties, make consistently good progress because of the well matched work they are set enables them to build their basic skills with confidence. The needs of the handful of potentially higher attainers are not as well met as the lower attainers and they do not make good enough progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As a result of the effective programme when they start school, children in the nursery settle well and are helped to develop friendships and work cooperatively with one another. The very good focus on personal and social development helps them to build good self-esteem and the confidence to 'have a go' at new things.

Pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral and social, development is good. Pupils like school, their behaviour and attitudes are good and, for many, the school is a place where they feel valued and respected. The 'Good Samaritan' award which is presented annually to the pupil who goes out of their way to help others is highly prized by the pupils. The school promotes pupils' well-being effectively. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. This is developed well through the national fruit scheme, the healthy tuck shop and the pupils' work, for example in science. Through the work of the school council and involvement in local community events, such as the Chesterton 'spring clean', pupils are able to contribute to their community.

The school assists pupils in developing secure basic skills to help them prepare for future careers but more could be done to promote leadership and enterprise. Attendance has been below average, largely due to illness or other genuine reasons. Attendance is at an average level this term.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, with good features in the infant years and upper junior years that enable lower and middle attaining pupils to make good progress. This is because all teachers ensure that work is set at the right level to help these pupils learn well. The regular additional input that pupils with learning difficulties receive from teaching assistants is very effective in supporting their good progress. In contrast, the work

planned does not always take sufficient account of the gains higher attainers should be expected to make within the time set, and tasks sometimes lack challenge, particularly in mathematics. Teaching in the lower juniors, though broadly satisfactory, has important shortcomings that inhibit good progress. Work in books shows that too little is expected of a few pupils in terms of quality and the amount completed, with presentation a particular weakness.

Assessment is satisfactory overall. The good focus on improving writing skills has resulted in pupils writing creatively and at length. The use of 'move on' points when writing is marked is a positive feature, showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Marking in mathematics is encouraging but lacks a sharp focus on improvement. There are not enough opportunities provided for pupils to review their personal achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It ensures that most pupils build on what they have previously learnt. The use of ICT to support pupils' work in different subjects has greatly improved since the previous inspection. The curriculum provided for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. It contributes well to the good progress they make. The curriculum is adapted suitably to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, pupils and parents are not sufficiently involved in reviewing progress. The new headteacher has already begun to address this and to streamline recordkeeping. From the moment children start school, a very strong emphasis is placed on their personal, social and health education. Much of the pupils' good behaviour, their enjoyment of learning and the good classroom relationships all stem from this positive provision.

The curriculum is enhanced well by various activities. Year 6 pupils were particularly excited by a trip to see Romeo and Juliet as part of their English work on play scripts – 'It was wicked' said one pupil. Enrichment afternoons provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to choose activities they would like to experience. Pupils told inspectors that they very much liked learning how to play golf, doing some gardening and creating exciting artwork.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school offers good levels of care and support. Pupils feel safe and secure and are confident that if they have any problems or concerns they will be dealt with effectively by a member of staff. Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are robust. The school has good links with many outside agencies, such as social services, that are assisting pupils and their families in times of need. The school successfully promotes a supportive and compassionate environment, which is appreciated by the pupils. For example, the many pupils who join the school during the year are well received and settle quickly as a result of good support systems. The school works exceptionally hard with the minority of pupils with emotional and

behavioural difficulties. The lunchtime nurture group, which is managed by two teaching assistants, is a successful example of this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The new headteacher is ambitious for the school and has a clear vision for its future development. She has the full backing of the staff, who show a strong commitment to the pupils, and the school has secure capacity to press ahead with raising standards. Her work this term in securing a better home—school partnership is already meeting with success.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Intensive programmes have been put in place to raise standards, which are already showing good improvement in English and satisfactory improvement in mathematics. Good progress has been made in improving ICT provision, which is reflected in the pupils' advancing skills. The school's environment also shows changes for the better in the bright and stimulating internal layout, however, the school knows there is still more to do to make the outside space as appealing, as and when funds allow.

School leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of sound monitoring. The school's well conceived action plan accurately identifies the issues flagged by this inspection as key priorities. However, further work is required in observing teaching and learning and involving more staff in the process. In particular, best practice must be shared and better used to iron out the inconsistencies in the progress being made by different groups of pupils.

The school is supported by well informed governors who make sure that all statutory requirements are met and who deploy resources efficiently to achieve value for money. They are fully representative of the community the school serves and told inspectors how proud they are of the high quality care shown and the 'oasis' the school provides for some very vulnerable young people.

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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?	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	2	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

The School Council Crackley Bank Primary Blackthorn Place Chesterton Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffs ST5 7BE

25 November 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting, talking and eating lunch with you. It was good to hear you say how happy coming to school makes you feel and how much you like learning new things!

What we liked best

- Children in the Nursery and Reception have settled well into school and made a good start.
- Pupils are kind and thoughtful, behave well and show good respect for the views of others.
- Teachers and the other adults help take good care of you, and make sure that you feel safe and secure and get extra support when you find things difficult.
- Your reading, writing and ICT skills are developing well.
- Your new headteacher has some good ideas for making the school even better.

What we think the school can do to improve

- Make sure that teaching in lower juniors enables all pupils to do the best they can.
- Find out more about how well you are doing in mathematics so that teachers can make sure the work you have is just right for you and not too easy or hard
- Tell you more about how you can improve your work and involve you in making regular checks on personal achievements.

Good luck to Mrs Stevenson and all at Crackley Bank for the future!

Yours sincerely,

Christine Ann Field Lead Inspector