



May Bank Infants' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124115
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281636
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Basford Park Road
School category	Community		May Bank
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5
			OPT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 297340
Number on roll	179	Fax number	01782 297343
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Pauline Wallbank
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Poland

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

May Bank is a very popular infants school that serves a suburban area. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education and good value for money. Pupils arrive with average standards. They are taught well and take part in a good range of activities in the Foundation Stage so they start Year 1 with above average standards, although the lack of sufficient outdoor facilities means that their creative development lags behind the other areas of learning. The good provision continues in other years, so they make consistently good progress as they move through the school and leave with exceptionally high standards. Progress in writing is outstanding because the school's managers have been very effective at improving every aspect that could promote pupils' skills in this area. They have been less effective in terms of the school's investment in computers, so pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is not as good. Nevertheless, the school is well placed to continue the good progress made since it was last inspected, because its evaluation of its performance is accurate and the actions taken to improve are effective. Parents are exceptionally supportive of, and involved in, the school. They know that their children are safe and well cared for. They rightly praise the school for its good work in developing pupils who are independent, well-behaved, happy and thoughtful of others' welfare.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made by pupils in ICT by providing more opportunities for them to use computers.
- Further explore possible ways to provide access to more outdoor facilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities make good progress. Children join the school with average standards, although their number skills are good and their writing skills are weak. They make good progress in almost all areas of their learning in the Foundation Stage, so start Year 1 with above average standards. Their creative development is not as good as other aspects, because they do not at present have free access to an outdoor area. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and standards meet the school's demanding targets. Pupils leave with exceptionally high standards, especially in reading and writing. The progress in writing is outstanding, given that this was the weakest skill on joining the school. Progress in mathematics is good, and standards are well above average. The relative weakness in performance is in ICT, where standards are average and progress is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. The skills they learn prepare them well for the next stage of their education and for their future adult life. Children quickly learn to conform to the routines of the Reception class. They are confident and comfortable in their environment and are soon starting to work independently. This independence is developed to an impressive level by the time they leave Year 2. Across the school, pupils develop well morally and socially. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. They cooperate well, often spontaneously offering to help each other. They have good spiritual awareness fostered by staff sensitive to the beliefs of all pupils. Assemblies have a strong spiritual base. Pupils have good knowledge of their own culture, but their understanding of other cultures is less well developed. Pupils enjoy their time in school very much. They behave well. Attendance is good although a few pupils are late in the mornings. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and live healthily. One child pointed out that she keeps an eye on what others are bringing for snacks, so they '...don't have anything to make them fat'. Pupils take part in sporting activities with enthusiasm, although hampered by the limited outdoor space and lack of a grassed area. Pupils play an active role in the life of the school, with the newly-formed school council being used well to involve them in school-wide consultation. Children work well with the local community, for example, helping to plant flowers on the adjacent common land, and collecting money for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, so pupils make good progress in their learning. Teachers are well aware of what can be achieved by the pupils, because their assessments are accurate and used well to plan the next steps in learning. This is particularly true in literacy, but is not so well advanced in numeracy. Teachers continually push pupils to achieve more, both in their academic work and in their personal development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently. On occasions, these tasks can go on for a little too long, with the teacher unaware that pupils may have drifted a little off task. However, their control is such that a single word or 'shush' is enough to get the whole class working again. The relatively small number of pupils with learning difficulties means they often receive individual support. When they do not need such support, the assistants are used well to work with other groups. The way that teachers and assistants question pupils is particularly good. Pupils in Year 1, for example, had their understanding of what objects emit light teased out of them as they peered into a darkened shoebox to find out what was inside.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is a strong emphasis on basic skills, whilst providing a good range of other subjects and activities. There are, however, not enough computers and some of those that are used are old and cannot run upto- date software. This means that pupils cannot use computers as much as they should, which is preventing them making as much progress as they do in their other subjects. There is an extensive range of visits that help pupils understand the wider world. Visits to a farm, for example, are used to learn about caring for animals and end with the basics of probability when they watch a sheep race! However, the lack of a grassed area, or free access to the outdoors for children in the Foundation Stage, places limitations on physical and creative activities. One particularly effective aspect of the school's work is the fortnightly projects, called 'mole sheets', that are sent home for parents to do with their children. Tasks such as writing a list or looking after a pet help to build a strong partnership with parents, as well as developing pupils' skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good support and guidance. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve their writing, because they are given very clear targets that are stuck on their desks so they can refer to them all the time. A similar approach has been started with mathematics, but is not as well advanced, so pupils are not sure about what their target is or when to refer to it. Staff know pupils very well and are in a position to give very good pastoral support. Pupils themselves feel that staff support them well and deal effectively with welfare issues such as bullying. Health and safety and child protection procedures provide good protection for staff and pupils. The school has worked hard to raise pupils' awareness of health, particularly in diet, and has been granted National Healthy Schools status.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school continues to go from strength to strength as a result of determined leadership. There is no sense of complacency in the school, with even minor weaknesses being tackled assiduously. All of the areas for improvement noted in this report have already been identified by the school. The school uses information about pupils' progress very well to identify areas of potential underachievement and quickly takes action to improve matters. There was a dip in standards in writing last year, for example, and comprehensive plans were immediately drawn up to make sure the dip did not become a trend. However, the relative weakness in progress in ICT has not been addressed quickly enough in the past, because the school did not have a long-term plan for renewing outdated computers and had not committed the necessary expenditure. The school has now ordered new computers and is awaiting their arrival. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Their views

are taken seriously and form an important part of the school's evaluation. There are many examples of how parents have directly influenced the way the school is organised, such as more extra-curricular activities and changes to homework. Links with parents are exceptionally strong, so they feel welcome and do all they can to support the school. There is a great deal of enthusiastic support, from parents and other bodies such as the Duchy of Lancaster, for the school's efforts to use part of the adjoining common land to provide extra outdoor space.

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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?	1	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	1	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	2	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?	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	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

Dear Children As you know, we came to see you at work recently and check on how well you are doing. We had a really nice time in your school. Mr Watts loved talking to the school council. The things that you told him helped us to understand why you like your school so much. I would like to say a special thank you to those who came to talk to me at playtime, so I didn't get lonely. We can see why you are so happy at school. The grown-ups look after you and make sure you stay safe. You learn lots of new things in lessons, and your writing is brilliant. The grown ups give you lots of interesting work to do. They trust you to get on with it by yourselves, and we were very impressed by the way you worked so well. Some of you said you would like to use computers more, and have more space in which to play so we have asked Mrs Poland if she could do something about this. You have lots of friends at school. You help each other with the work and play together very happily. We particularly like the way you think about others and how what you do will make them feel. Thank you for helping us with our work and for being so kind to us. Best wishes Mr Driscoll (Lead inspector)