



Flax Hill Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124135
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281641
Inspection dates 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006
Reporting inspector Edward Wheatley AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Chestnut Avenue
School category	Community		Gillway
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 8QZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01827 475675
Number on roll	276	Fax number	01827 475680
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Gordon Watson
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Nick Price

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school that takes pupils from almost entirely White British backgrounds. No pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is broadly average and the proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry is slightly above average. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is 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

This is a good school. The headteacher's leadership is good and he is well supported by other staff who manage their responsibilities well. The school evaluates its performance accurately. It recognised weaknesses in mathematics, and good subject leadership is dealing with these effectively. Governors are well informed and support the school well. The school has dealt with the issues from its last inspection and its capacity to improve further is good. The school provides good value for money.

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average overall. Progress is good in English and science where standards are above the national averages. In mathematics, standards are broadly average by Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Lower down the school, pupils make good progress in mathematics because of the school's effective efforts to raise standards in this subject, although a small proportion of the most able pupils still do not do well enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress throughout the school.

Teaching is good and is improving, particularly in mathematics. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently. The marking of work does not consistently guide pupils, especially the most able, on how to make further progress. The curriculum is good, with a wide range of extra-curricular activities in which many pupils readily participate.

Pupils' personal development is good and the school provides effective care, guidance and support. They enjoy school, their attendance is good and they make good contributions to the community. Links with local schools are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work for the most capable pupils in mathematics is consistently challenging.
- Improve marking so that all pupils, and especially the highest attainers, are given guidance on how to make further progress.
- Ensure that pupils receive more opportunities to develop their skills of learning independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reach above average standards. From their slightly better than average starting points, most pupils make good progress. The school's targets are challenging; they were met in English, but not in mathematics. As a result of good teaching, standards in English and science are above average and pupils make good progress in these subjects. In mathematics, whilst pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, it is not as good as in English and science and a few higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should in this subject. However, standards and progress are improving considerably from the lower part of the school upwards because the

good teaching approaches used in English and science are being increasingly applied to mathematics. In addition, new subject leadership, a new scheme of work used across the whole school and training for staff are having a positive impact on improving pupils' progress. Early indications show that the school's test results in 2006 are better than those in 2005, when they were above average overall.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of accurate recognition of their learning needs and good support during lessons. Standards in design and technology are above average and much improved since the school was last inspected. Pupils make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and join in all activities enthusiastically. Attendance is good and the great majority of pupils behave well. Pupils are interested in lessons and work hard. They take pride in their achievements, show a positive attitude to handling the responsibilities they are given and make a considerable contribution to helping the school run smoothly.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Well run assemblies with interesting themes give pupils a keen insight into qualities of generosity and fairness. In discussion, pupils show that they have thought about and reflected on what they have seen and heard, and developed responsible attitudes of their own. Pupils gain a good awareness of the beliefs of others through assemblies and religious education. Multicultural work is well established. Year 5 pupils, for instance, were fascinated by the African chants and instruments used in their music lesson. Pupils have a good awareness of risks and how to avoid dangers. They respond positively to the school's efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles and most take part in physical exercise and eat healthily. Pupils are beginning to understand their targets for improvement, particularly in English, and are acquiring the skills they need for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In English and science, they are especially good because teachers set targets for pupils and plan lessons based on accurate assessment of pupils' learning needs. As a result, lessons have a wide range of lively and interesting activities that promote enjoyment and good progress. Teachers are now adopting the same kind of approach to mathematics teaching, where achievement has not been as good, particularly for some of the higher attaining pupils. Improving progress in mathematics indicates that the changes are beginning to pay off.

Most teachers provide challenging work and pupils respond well to this. Pupils are given good opportunities to think through problems for themselves. For example, in a Year 3 technology lesson, pupils learned about pneumatics in making a model alien, linked to a story 'The Aliens Are Coming'. They designed the models, chose their materials, talked confidently about the mechanism they used and then built their monsters. They then evaluated how they had worked and how to improve their models. However, this good practice is not consistently applied by all teachers and, in some lessons, chances are missed to get pupils to think through and resolve problems themselves. Marking is often good, but does not always give enough advice to pupils, especially the most capable, on how to make further progress. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good because teachers know their pupils and make sure the right learning steps are planned out for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is enriched by many visits. For example, following a trip to Dovedale, pupils worked on computers to match photographs to map coordinates of the areas they visited. There is a wide range of well attended after-school and lunchtime clubs and activities. The school works closely with the two local secondary schools to develop sport and music. There are some good links between subjects. For instance, Year 6 pupils studied Ancient Egypt and worked on a production of 'The Boy King' for their Leavers Concert. Aspects of healthy lifestyles are included in the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about healthy eating and making sandwiches and enjoy working with a local bakery to test out their solutions.

The school's citizenship programme is good. Pupils work together in small groups to explore, for example, the problems of alcohol misuse, and to run small projects to support Sport Aid, which help them to develop their roles as future citizens.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and they have full access to the curriculum. However, there are still a few gaps in the planning of work to meet the needs of the highest attainers in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

are citizens of the future' and it is effective in doing this. Behaviour and anti-bullying policies are successful, and, for example, have been used well to deal with concerns about bullying expressed by a small number of pupils. Safety and child protection procedures are good. The school works hard with families to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are occasionally absent. It also works closely with parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who do not settle easily, to provide effective support to enable these pupils to develop their skills and confidence. Assessment information is used well to guide pupils, particularly in English and science, where the school monitors pupils' progress against targets it sets for them. The school has rightly recognised the need to improve the use of assessment in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed and the headteacher gives clear direction for how the school can improve further. He is well supported by senior staff and by subject leaders. They lead and manage their own areas of responsibilities well. This is evident in the good progress made by pupils in English and science, in the positive impact of the carefully prepared improvements for mathematics and the improvements made in design and technology since the school was last inspected. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school uses its information well to plan improvements. However, its evaluation of teaching, while accurate, does not always give enough guidance to teachers on how to make their teaching even better. Improvement planning is good. The school strives to meet the needs of all of its learners but as yet does not fully meet the needs of the most able pupils in mathematics.

Governors carry out their roles well. They are well informed and play an active part in supporting the school and working with it to plan improvements. Communication with homes is good and the school listens to what parents and pupils say and acts on their views where appropriate. The school provides good value for money.

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	NA	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	2	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	3	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	3	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

15 July 2006

Dear Pupils

We very much enjoyed our time at your school. You made us feel very welcome and many of you spoke to us in meetings, lessons and around school and helped us to gain a clear impression of your school. We judged it a good school.

The best things about your school are

You make good progress in English, science and other subjects and your progress is improving in mathematics.

You enjoy school, behave well and work hard, and most of you attend regularly.

The school takes good care of you, teaches you about healthy lifestyles and sets you targets about how to improve how well you do.

Teaching is good and you join in the wide range of activities and clubs the school has with great enjoyment.

The headteacher leads the school well and he is well supported by all staff.

Those of you who find learning difficult receive good support.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to

Make sure that work is hard enough for the most capable of you in mathematics.

Improve marking so that all of you, and especially the most able among you, know how to do even better.

Ensure that you receive more chances to solve problems on your own.

With best wishes

T Wheatley Lead Inspector