



Princefield First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124173
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281651
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector John Eadie RISP

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

Type of school	First	School address	Saxon Road
School category	Community		Penkridge
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 5EP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 714 050
Number on roll	241	Fax number	01785 716 559
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr George Duncombe
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Chris Lord

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 9	16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	281651

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves the market town of Penkridge, with a few pupils travelling in from the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, reflecting the higher than average socio-economic indicators for the area. Almost all pupils are White British, with a few of mixed heritage. All pupils speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average. The headteacher has been in post since April and the deputy since September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that it is a satisfactory school. Standards are above average overall but only average in mathematics, which has been the weakest subject in the school for some years. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory and most reach above average standards by the end of the Reception Year. Particular strengths of the school are the pupils' behaviour and their enjoyment of school. The school is a very happy, orderly place where pupils are very polite. The curriculum is satisfactory but some subjects are not covered as well as they should be because the amount of teaching time in the school is less than is recommended.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following the last inspection, standards declined and some of the weaknesses identified were not tackled as quickly as they should have been. However, the new management team is having an impact on halting the decline in standards and the school is improving rapidly. The headteacher, in her short time in post, has shown good clear vision and recognised the most important features that need improving. Teaching is satisfactory. A new system of assessment is being used well in writing to identify what pupils need to do to improve further. However, assessment is weak in other subjects and this means that sometimes pupils are not given work at the right level to take their learning forward. The headteacher, supported well by staff and governors, is providing the school with a good capacity to improve. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in mathematics
- use assessment more consistently to measure progress and identify what pupils need to do to improve further
- ensure all subjects have enough teaching time to cover the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There are no clear past records of children's attainment on entry to the Nursery, but for the current group it is above average. Good systems have recently been introduced to measure pupils' starting points and the progress they make throughout the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and most reach above average standards as they leave Reception to join Year 1.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 4. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 have been declining in recent years from well above average, and they were above average in 2004. They declined further in 2005, though there was a higher than usual proportion of pupils with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties in this group. This decline has been halted since the arrival of the new headteacher due to the systems put in place to track pupils' progress in writing. This

has enabled teachers to build on pupils' previous learning and encourage better progress. The targets set for pupils' achievement in all year groups are suitably challenging and pupils are on course to meet them.

Standards have been weaker in mathematics than other subjects for some years largely because pupils' mental skills are not sufficiently developed. The school has realised this and is planning to put in place measures to raise standards. The improving provision for pupils' achievement is leading to rising standards, though this will take time to build through the school. All groups of pupils achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very enthusiastic and eager to come to school. This positive attitude is reflected in good attendance and punctuality. They listen to their teachers with rapt interest and eagerly tackle their work with very good levels of concentration. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and during break times because pupils show respect and consideration for each other. Older pupils show a mature sense of responsibility as they perform their duties, for example as playground buddies looking after younger pupils. The focus on safety and the adoption of healthy eating and active lifestyles is well established and pupils are learning safe and healthy practices well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to make a good contribution to the local community, taking part in events such as the local Victorian market, and are responsive to the needs of others. Although there is no school council, there is an elected body of pupils which focuses on improving the environment of the school. This is helping pupils to develop skills that will contribute to their future well-being. However, pupils do not have sufficient awareness of the multicultural nature of society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are a number of good features. For example, teachers usually make their lessons interesting and stimulating, which results in pupils enjoying their learning. This is supported by the good range of methods that teachers use, such as games to enthuse and absorb the pupils. Discussion and good question-and-answer sessions are a useful part of most lessons that further involve pupils. Assessment procedures are not good enough and teachers do not always know exactly what pupils have already learnt. This sometimes results in pupils being given work that is too difficult or insufficiently challenging. Pupils then either struggle with what they have been given to do or say that they find the work too easy. This has been addressed in writing, but not in other subjects. Some lessons, particularly in mathematics, are too slow and, for example, pupils are not expected to respond quickly enough with mental calculations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school now provides adequately for information and communication technology (ICT) which was identified as a weakness in the last report. However, not enough time is given to some other subjects because the total teaching time is less than average. For example, geography is not being taught to some pupils at all this term. Some classes also spend more time than others on literacy and numeracy. Pupils with learning difficulties get good support that meets their particular needs. There is a good variety of after-school activities that are well attended by pupils throughout the school. The many visitors and visits, such as the residential trip for Year 4 and the canal study for Year 3, add much to pupils' learning. There are very good links with the middle school and this ensures a smooth transition for all pupils to their next stage of education. There is a strong focus, through a range of subjects such as science and design and technology, on health, safety and citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care provided by the school is good and this contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Child protection procedures are good and staff are alert to pupils who might be anxious or distressed and take prompt action if necessary. Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that any concerns, such as bullying, are dealt with promptly and effectively. The very good relationships between parents and carers; teachers and pupils help pupils to feel safe and secure. Very good personal support and guidance are provided for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities. This is a very caring school and pupils are well looked after because good procedures are in place and they are well known to all adults within the school. Some effective assessment systems have been put in place, for example to track the progress of the youngest children. However, for pupils in Years 1 to 4 there are gaps in the information on their progress. The information that is available is not always used effectively to make sure that pupils work at the right level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership team has made a very good start and halted the decline in standards. The head and deputy have initiated a fresh impetus for other staff with management responsibilities. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction, based on the good vision of the headteacher. She quickly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school, most ably supported by her deputy, and shared this with staff. This has led to good plans for improvement that the staff are working very hard to implement. Pupils have been consulted on their views and these opinions have been incorporated into development plans. Parents have very positive views of the school and say such things as their child is 'bursting with enthusiasm', and that their child 'tells friends and family that school is great'.

However, parents have not been formally consulted and are, therefore, not yet part of the development process.

Governance is good and governing body committees have been working efficiently over the years. As more planning and monitoring is now being carried out effectively in school, the governing body committee structure has been simplified very successfully to focus even more on its strategic role. Finances are particularly carefully managed, aided by the expertise of a number of governors. They are overseeing good plans to reduce to a reasonable level a significant carry-forward. Resources are generally used well. All statutory requirements are met, though some minor health and safety checks are not carried out sufficiently regularly.

The school now has good systems in place to check on its strengths and weaknesses. Some improvements have been made and senior staff have accurately identified the key areas to tackle to bring about further improvements.

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	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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	3	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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?	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	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	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

Princefield First School Saxon Road Penkridge Stafford ST19 5EP

18 November 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed talking to so many of you and looking at your work. You were very helpful and polite.

There are a number of things that your school does well and we think that the following are the best:

- you behave really well and get on very well with each other
- you enjoy school very much because your teachers usually make their lessons interesting
- your headteacher and the staff have a very clear view of how they can make your school better and the school is improving rapidly
- teachers and other adults take care of you really well
- you are being encouraged well to stay safe and healthy.

There are a few things that we think your school should improve. They are already working on these:

- you do well in English and science, but could be doing better in mathematics
- information on your progress could be used better to help you to improve and set work that you do not find too easy or too difficult
- not enough time is spent in lessons, which means that geography, for example, isn't on some class timetables at all this term. Also some classes spend more time on literacy and numeracy than others.

Yours sincerely,

John D Eadie Lead Inspector