



St Mark's CofE (A) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124308
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281687
Inspection dates 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Chris Kessell AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lawrence Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Shelton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 4QD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 234411
Number on roll	269	Fax number	01782 234411
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Cotton
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Cross

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 27 June 2006 - 28 June 2006	Inspection number 281687
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. Pupils are mostly of Pakistani heritage, although small numbers of other ethnic groups are represented. About a fifth of pupils speak little or no English when they start school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. A higher proportion of pupils than average have learning difficulties. A high number of pupils either leave or join the school during the academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This happy school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. This judgement reflects the school's own view. The majority of parents are supportive of the school, although a small minority have concerns about pupils' behaviour. Behaviour is good and older pupils say that it has improved in recent years. The school is working to develop its partnership with parents further. Pupils have just elected a school council and are looking forward 'to making sure the school is a good place.'

Achievement as a whole is satisfactory, although children in Reception make good progress as a result of the focused and well-organised provision. Despite this, many of the children do not reach expected goals for learning by the time they begin Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress between Years 1 to 6, although standards remain below average by Year 6. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there are times when activities are not always matched well to pupils' individual needs and teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. Pupils' skills of speaking and listening carefully are not always promoted well. The school acknowledges that more needs to be done to use assessment information more effectively, especially in tracking pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and far more rapid since the arrival of the current headteacher. She has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Under her leadership, the school's capacity to improve is good. However, systems for monitoring the school's work are limited and data is not always used effectively to evaluate pupils' performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan challenging activities for all pupils and track their progress rigorously.
- Promote the skills of speaking and listening more effectively.
- Sharpen the use of performance data and other monitoring activities to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Effective provision in the Reception classes enables children to make good progress, although most do not reach expected goals for learning by Year 1. The good start to school is not continued through the infant years. Progress is satisfactory, so that by the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading and mathematics and well below average in writing. This is an improvement on the last few years, when standards have been well below average in all three areas.

Standards are below average in English and mathematics by Year 6. However, the vast majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards vary as a result of pupils either

leaving or joining the school, particularly in the juniors. For example, two fifths of the current Year 6 were not at the school in Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as their peers. However, they make good progress when they are provided with good support or when work is matched precisely to their needs. Pupils who arrive at school with no English are given good support and make good progress in acquiring a new language. Target setting is relatively new to the school and, at present, it is not contributing to raising standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and most are attentive and try hard in lessons. Overall behaviour is good and children say that any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with effectively by the school. Pupils feel safe at school and adopt safe practices such as moving around the school sensibly. Attendance is below average despite the school's best efforts. Much of the absence is due to extended holidays taken by pupils and their families to their countries of origin.

The school council, although still in the early stages of development, has been involved in devising plans to improve playground equipment and in developing anti-bullying initiatives. Pupils are aware of how to follow healthy lifestyles. They use the filtered water that is available to them throughout the day and appreciate the fruit provided at break time. Pupils state that 'we eat healthy food,' but not all packed lunches are nutritious.

Pupils contribute satisfactorily to the wider community through charity fundraising and there are links with St Mark's Church. Pupils are gradually acquiring the basic skills that will help and support them in their next stage of education and future working life through the opportunities provided for teamwork and independent learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children in Reception learn well because teaching is effective in ensuring that activities are well matched to their needs. Assessment is used well to track the children's progress.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. A number of pupils commented that their work was 'too easy.' Consequently, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of. In the best lessons, teachers engage pupils with their enthusiasm and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. All classroom relationships are good and pupils behave well in lessons.

In their eagerness to do well, too many pupils call out in class and do not listen carefully to what others are saying. Too often this is not managed effectively and undermines

the emphasis the school places on speaking and listening carefully. The effective use of skilled teaching assistants and other adults ensures that pupils with learning difficulties, or in the early stages of learning English, make at least satisfactory progress.

Assessment information is not yet used rigorously enough to plan work and check pupils' progress. While teachers rightly praise pupils for their efforts when marking work, many comments are too general. As a result, pupils are not sure how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Activities generally meet the range of pupils' needs and build satisfactorily on the pupils' levels of understanding and previous experience. The curriculum is successfully adapted for pupils with specific needs, such as those at the early stages of learning English. The provision for music and history has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. There are still weaknesses in the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT). The subject is currently a priority for development, with targeted improvement of resources and extensive professional development for teachers. The curriculum for the youngest children is good, although the outdoor play area for children in Reception is limited. An exciting project is in hand to improve this area.

A range of local visits and visitors such as theatre groups and artists satisfactorily contributes to the pupils' enjoyment of their school work. As many of the pupils visit the local mosque after school, there are limited activities to extend the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Procedures for child protection are clear, up to date and known to staff. Risk assessments are undertaken. Staff are well informed about any pupils who have specific medical problems, and care well for them. The school responds well to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. A learning mentor works closely with individual pupils, which has been successful in raising their self-esteem. Where pupils have specific needs, the school makes effective use of liaison with outside agencies to ensure they are well supported. The school works successfully with the Education Welfare Officer and parents to improve attendance.

The process of setting and reviewing targets throughout the school is still being developed. Pupils receive limited guidance and advice towards achieving their targets and many pupils are still confused about how group targets are supposed to benefit them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The pace of improvement since the last inspection quickened with the arrival of the current headteacher and there is good capacity to improve further. She has, for example, improved the quality of financial management and introduced a number of good strategies to raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of education. However, many strategies, such as the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, are in their early stages and have not yet had an impact of improving pupils' achievement.

Although the headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, not enough use is made of school data and other monitoring activities to ensure, for example, that all pupils are making sufficient progress. Not all subject leaders have a precise understanding of the standards in their subjects.

The views of pupils and parents are taken seriously. Parents are consulted annually through a questionnaire and the school has recently begun a parents' forum to discuss school issues. The governors are supportive of the school and proud that it is the home for a number of religions and beliefs, as well as being a Church of England school. Governors are well informed by the headteacher but are not sufficiently involved in strategic development and self-evaluation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	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	3	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?	3	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	4	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 recently visited your school to see how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly and talkative. It was nice to see so many smiley faces as we walked around the school. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

What your school does well

- You get a good start in the Reception classes.
- Your headteacher really wants the school to get even better and she is determined to make this happen.
- Most of you behave well and are keen to work hard.
- The new school council members are enthusiastic about their job.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Give you all the right amount of work in lessons, particularly those of you who find work too easy, and regularly check the progress that you are all making.
- Make sure you put your hands up when you want to say something and listen carefully to what others have to say.
- Look more carefully at what is happening in the school to make sure that you are all able to do your best.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead Inspector