

Northfield Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103775
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	286751
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip Willetts
Headteacher	N Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003
School address	Northfield Road Netherton Dudley DY2 9ER
Telephone number	01384 818710
Fax number	01384 818711

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school serving an area of significant deprivation. One quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well above average, and includes 15 who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties, at 42%, is well above average, and 10 pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Northfield Road Primary is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. They enjoy school because good care, guidance and support promote a positive environment for learning where they feel safe and secure. Good partnerships with external agencies support this. As a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development and well-being throughout the school. Good relationships exist between members of the school community and pupils feel a sense of responsibility towards supporting their school in a number of effective ways. Behaviour in school has improved, and is now good, in response to consistent practice from all staff in implementing systems to promote good behaviour and good social and moral development.

When children enter Reception their skills are less well developed than is usual for their age. This attainment on entry has fallen since the previous inspection, with a resulting decline in standards on entry to Year 1. Recent improvements in provision have ensured that Reception children are now making steady and improving progress. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory but by the end of Year 6, standards remain below average, particularly in writing. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive good support, and make good progress as a result.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the school is working hard to improve their quality through a number of strategies that are beginning to show the first signs of raising pupils' standards. Teachers now have detailed information on the standards being reached by each child to help with their planning. Where the information is being used well, pupils have clear targets and help on how to reach them. Not all teachers are yet using it consistently to plan for each individual's learning needs, and marking of pupils' work does not always give helpful feedback on the next steps.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of activities to meet the needs of the pupils. An effective programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is promoting good development of safe and healthy lifestyles. At present, as the school recognises, pupils do not practise their writing skills across a wide enough range of subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the school's capacity for improvement. Wider roles and greater responsibilities have been taken on by senior leaders since the last inspection and various initiatives implemented to ensure improving standards at Key Stage 2. This, in turn, has led to an increased impetus for change, with a particular focus on Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Stage. Leaders at all levels are beginning to develop their skills in self-evaluation. However, as yet, subject leaders do not all use information about pupils' progress to identify accurately where the quality of provision needs to improve. The great majority of parents have a positive view of the school's work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement by ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment information when planning lessons and give clear guidance in marking on pupils' next steps.

- Improve the planning of the curriculum by identifying opportunities to use a range of writing skills across all subjects.
- Develop the evaluation skills of subject co-ordinators, with a firm focus on improving the quality of provision and pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the Reception Year, children make satisfactory gains in learning and in their social development. However, few pupils enter Year 1 having reached the expected goals for their age in reading, writing and mathematical development. The school is working hard with well-focused support for pupils who need extra help, such as the 'talking partners' system, and this is beginning to compensate for the lack of skills on entry. This, along with very effective support to meet language learning needs, ensures that pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress through the school.

All other groups make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. Standards in Key Stage 2 improved to below average in the 2006 national tests. They are lower in the current Year 6, where pupils' standards on entry were particularly low, but are continuing to improve in Years 3 to 5 as a result of the introduction of more effective systems to track individual progress and identify and support those who are underachieving. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the effective additional support they receive in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. An annual survey of pupils' views shows that very few are concerned about bullying, compared with a significant number a year ago. Pupils demonstrate safe practices around the school and show a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. One girl in Year 5 said, 'We don't have fizzy drinks or sweets.' Attendance levels are satisfactory overall, but good for older pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because pupils participate well in the school community and respect the cultural diversity within it. They welcome responsibilities and carry them out effectively. In particular, buddies make a significant contribution to harmonious relationships and improved behaviour in the playground. School council members improve their citizenship skills well. Pupils' well-developed personal skills, especially confidence and self-esteem, contribute to adequate preparation for the next stage in their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school staff have clear expectations about behaviour, so that most pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully. The aims of lessons are explained carefully so pupils are clear about what they are to learn. Work is planned carefully for those pupils who have specific learning needs, and those with language needs. Where teaching is good, teachers have high expectations and activities are interesting and well planned for all groups. Where teaching is not as strong, there is a lack of challenge for the more able pupils because planning is not adapted well enough to meet their needs. All pupils are involved in target setting, and where

assessment information is used well to help planning and in the marking of work, pupils make good progress. These approaches are not consistently the case so pupils are not always clear about the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is improving the curriculum in a number of areas, for example, better links between work in the Reception Year and Year 1. It is also improving provision in the outdoor and indoor areas, and it makes the best use of ageing and restrictive accommodation to support learning. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in reading and mathematics across the school. Standards in writing are improving, but pupils' experience of writing across a range of subjects differs from class to class. There are missed opportunities in some classes, especially Key Stage 2, for pupils to practise and improve the skills learned in literacy lessons. Information and communication technology is increasingly used to support pupils' independent learning.

A carefully thought out programme for PSHE provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the benefits related to healthy living, safety and personal relationships. The experiences of all pupils are enhanced by a good range of school clubs and activities, as well as regular well-planned visits, residential visits for the older pupils, and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Members of staff know the pupils and their home backgrounds very well and ensure the needs of vulnerable pupils are well met. Very thorough procedures to monitor and promote attendance help the school analyse the reasons for absence and provide support so that absences have the minimum impact on achievement. The school provides unobtrusive support for those with physical disabilities, enabling them to partake fully in all aspects of school life. Good guidance is provided as pupils join the school and as they move to secondary school. Most pupils know what their targets are in English and mathematics but are not always given individual guidance and support to enable them to improve their work to meet these targets.

Very thorough attention is paid to health and safety procedures, especially in relation to trips out of school. First aid arrangements are good and take due account of the layout of the accommodation. Secure child protection procedures are in place and staff awareness is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher and other senior leaders have successfully shared their vision for raising standards with staff, and the school is improving. Systems for checking the school's work are well established. The school's leadership has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. However, evaluation is not sufficiently detailed to show where efforts for improvement will be of most benefit. This has led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection but a comparatively slow pace of change. For example, although standards have improved overall by Year 6, improvements to the Foundation Stage provision have only recently been put in place. The school is beginning to extend the leadership role to a wider group of staff who are developing a range of skills to support change and improvement. This now includes the

Foundation Stage manager, whose deployment has already improved the direction for the work of the Foundation Stage. Recently, leaders have introduced more effective systems for tracking the progress of pupils. These systems are enabling teachers to plan their work more effectively and identify where pupils need additional support. Challenging school targets for national tests are now more carefully linked to the individual targets set for pupils. Many of the school's governors are newly in post. They are giving satisfactory support to the school's leadership and are developing their skills appropriately to support the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northfield Primary School, Northfield Road, Dudley DY2 9ER

Recently, we visited your school to check on how well you are doing. We enjoyed our visit. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us.

We thought you might like to know what we found out about your school and how we think it can improve.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education.
- Your headteacher and staff look after you very well and keep you safe.
- You enjoy school, where your behaviour is good and you work and play well together, and this helps you in your good personal development.
- Many of you take on responsibilities like being buddies and school councillors, which help to make the school a better place for others.
- You understand how to keep yourself and others safe and told us that there is very little bullying or racism in school.
- Most of you make satisfactory progress in lessons, where much of the teaching is satisfactory, and you also enjoy some good teaching.

To improve further, we have asked the school to do a number of things:

- Help you to improve your standards in your work by making your 'Steps to Success' very clear.
- Make sure lessons help each one of you to improve, as the best lessons already do.
- Give you plenty of opportunities to practise your writing in as many lessons as possible.
- Support leaders to improve the areas for which they are responsible.

We hope that you will do your best to help teachers to put these in place and make the school even better than it is.

Ruth Westbrook Lead Inspector