

Butts Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104147
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	286866
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Blackhall
Headteacher	Duncan Speirs
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002
School address	Butts Road Walsall WS4 2AH
Telephone number	01922 721073
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Butts Primary School is similar in size to most other primary schools. It is situated in an area of considerable social disadvantage. A third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals; half of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups and around a third speaks English as an additional language. These are higher than average. When children begin school, their skills are well below the levels normally expected for children of this age. There is a high mobility rate in the area so pupils enter and leave the school more frequently than usual. The present headteacher took up post in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with a number of strengths. The dedication of the staff and their warm relationships with the pupils make the school a happy place in which to learn. The pupils really enjoy coming to school and their attendance has improved dramatically and is now average. The effective leadership by the headteacher has created a secure platform for continued improvement and this is recognised by the parents. The personal development of the pupils is good. The strong provision in this area helps them grow in confidence and develop a pride in their work. Whilst behaviour has improved and exclusions have reduced dramatically, there are still pupils who are inclined to show disrespect towards others and this can disrupt how well all pupils learn. Standards are average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Some make better progress than others. When children begin school their skills are poor, but effective teaching helps them make good progress through the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 and they reach average standards by Year 2. Less able pupils, those with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress through the school. Teaching is satisfactory but not all teachers are good at asking questions that will take learning forward and draw extended answers from the pupils in their lessons. The teaching is strongly focused on developing writing skills and the welltrained teaching assistants provide good support. Activities are interesting. Staff carry out regular assessments and track pupils' progress effectively. However, some of the more able pupils are not given hard enough work and so do not achieve as well as they should. Within the satisfactory curriculum there are excellent opportunities for pupils to learn important life skills such as keeping healthy, handling money and helping others. A particularly effective aspect is way the school works with the local community to increase pupils' enjoyment of school and encourage healthy recreation. School dinners provide pupils with a terrific example of healthy eating. Throughout the school there is good emphasis on writing in English lessons but planning for pupils to write in other subjects is not done well enough. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are given a say in how they can improve their school and this contributes to their feeling of safety and well-being. The school works well with parents and other agencies to help children develop confidence and in preparing them for their next schools. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The school judges its performance accurately and is aware it needs to ensure greater consistency in expectations for pupils' standards and progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the challenge in lessons and the provision in the curriculum for the more able pupils.
- Ensure more and better planned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in subjects other than English.
- Support and extend pupils' speaking skills through better questioning which prompts higher quality responses during lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start Nursery with poor skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Despite good progress in personal, social and emotional development and their knowledge and use of sounds in the Foundation Stage, many of them start Year 1 with lower than average standards. From Years 1 to 6, progress is satisfactory. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress because teaching and learning are generally well matched to abilities and by the end

of Year 2, standards are average. Throughout the school the large group of less able pupils and those learning English as an additional language make good progress because of the way that the school organises their learning and the well matched support in lessons. All pupils are making good progress in writing and the more able pupils are now reaching standards they should because expectations are higher than they were. In other areas of their learning the more able pupils are not always given hard enough work, and do not progress as well as they should. Consequently, few pupils reach above average standards. Pupils make good progress in their use and understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) and this contributes well to their personal development and their learning in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. The Nursery and Reception classes provide younger children with a happy and settled start to school life. A programme of positive rewards has encouraged pupils to attend more regularly. The pupils are very keen to adopt healthy lifestyles and their knowledge of the types of food that are good for them, and those which are not, is outstanding. For example, their involvement in decisions about providing and selling healthy drinks in school enables pupils to keep fit and healthy and to develop economic skills and understanding needed for the workplace. Pupils feel safe and secure in school, because 'Teachers listen to your problems and sort things out'. Pupils' social and moral development is adequate. Behaviour is only satisfactory because a few pupils' boisterous behaviour serves to distract others. Incidents of bullying and racist remarks, however, are rare. Spiritual and cultural development is good. The pupils talk enthusiastically about their participation in productions and their enjoyment of art and music, which provide time for deeper reflection. Pupils are developing a positive view about themselves and what they can achieve. They have confidence in working with adults from outside school and are keen to stay on for clubs and take part in competitive activities. The school council very successfully promotes the pupils' views and initiatives. Pupils believe their ideas are listened to, for example zoning the playground into different play areas.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are variable in quality through the school and this affects pupils' progress. The teaching of English is good because of the careful planning and good delivery of the literacy scheme the school has adopted. Teaching assistants are well trained and focus effectively on meeting the language needs of the less able. The needs of pupils learning English are well understood and their language development is rapid. The teachers use an effective range of teaching strategies including good use of the whiteboards linked to computers and 'talking partners'. However, there is not enough depth to the questions teachers ask and too many pupils frequently get away with one word or short sentence responses. This does not adequately challenge and stretch pupils' language. In some lessons this also leads to restlessness because the pupils themselves know they can do better. The pace of learning is best in Years 1 and 2 because the teachers consistently reward pupils who make the effort to respond or whose contribution lifts the learning. Teachers are now making better use of assessment information to track progress, and pupils are getting to know their targets. The teachers' expectations of more able pupils are sometimes demonstrated well by some challenging tasks but this is not consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers in the Foundation Stage provide a well-judged balance of direct teaching and those activities children chose for themselves. Provision for role play is good but there is not a sufficiently planned intervention in most free choice activities to take the learning forwards for the more able. The extra provision for art and sport makes a good contribution to the basic curriculum and boosts pupils' confidence and enjoyment of school. Regular visits to venues to perform or participate in competitive sports broaden pupils' horizons and help build ambition. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their ICT skills in a variety of lessons, but there is not the same consistency in the way their writing skills are developed in other subjects. This is a significant area for development given the need to provide further opportunities to stretch the more able pupils, including those learning English as an additional language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high quality of school dinners makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' welfare and this is recognised by the growth in numbers from 70 to 120. The school has good procedures for safeguarding pupils. Risk assessments are firmly in place in school and on visits. Parents say that their children are in safe hands and that staff are approachable if there are any problems. Teachers monitor well pupils who need extra help or care. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress with their learning because of this. The school tracks the academic progress of different groups carefully. Good tracking of the pupils' progress in learning to speak English more fluently enables them to know where they stand. Pupils understand and value the goals set for their learning. One pupil suggested, 'Before we had targets I was stuck on sums and didn't know what to do.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

As one member of the governing body put it, 'The headteacher, since joining the school in September, has made haste slowly'. Recent developments are having a very strong impact on raising standards in English, improving attendance and pupils' personal development and well-being. The headteacher and senior leaders have developed further the strategies for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school through rigorous evaluation of pupils' progress and regular checking on teaching. This gives them a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has led to timely interventions to improve achievement. For example, the introduction of an easy to use marking scheme has boosted teachers' and pupils' understanding of what is required to make pupils' work better. The school's view of its performance is accurate although more weight was given to recent progress than is reflected in improvements in standards and teaching since the previous inspection. Governors are ambitious for the school and there is a well-shared sense of purpose. They are beginning to become involved in helping draw up priorities for further improvement and have a well-matched programme of building development that demonstrates high expectations of learners. Some very creative work to involve parents, businesses and other professionals in the life of the school also demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
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	2

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	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing on behalf of the inspectors to let you know what we discovered when we visited your school. First of all, let me thank you for the warm welcome we received. You were all most helpful in answering our questions and we enjoyed spending time with you in lessons. We know your school provides a satisfactory education and we agree with you that there are many good things about it. We were impressed to see how well the school has encouraged you to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Like you, we found the school dinners to be excellent. Your enterprising approach to raising funds for playground equipment and the adjustments you have helped make to the organisation of playtime have certainly helped ensure a safe and happy time in school. We can see that you like the various reward schemes that operate in school and we were very pleased to see that your attendance at school has improved so rapidly. We know that some of you are not always as well behaved as you should be, and do not always think about others' feelings. We agree that the school is working hard to sort this out and you think this is getting better. Remember you can help by always being respectful. Many things tell us that you enjoy school, such as the way you help each other during lessons and how keen you are to do your writing. We agree with your headteacher that you are making good progress with your writing. We have asked that the teachers provide you with more chance to develop your writing in other subjects. The staff know you well and take good care of you and this helps you feel safe. They plan some exciting lessons but we thought that some of you need harder work to make you think. We have asked that they make sure your work is hard enough and the questions they ask make you think and answer that little bit more. You are lucky to have such an excellent headteacher, and your parents agree as well because they wrote and told us. We know your headteacher and the governors have lots of plans to make your school even better and they are good at involving you in this.