

Stowlawn Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104317
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	286907
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Hill
Headteacher	Sue Vaughan
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Green Park Avenue Stowlawn Bilston WV14 6EH
Telephone number	01902 556463
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ). Pupil mobility at the school is high and an above-average number have learning difficulties and disabilities. There have been several staff changes over the past two years, including new leadership and senior management. The school is about to undergo a rebuilding programme.

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 in which the very positive ethos enables all pupils to develop high levels of self-esteem, enjoyment and confidence. Because they are valued, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and their personal development is good. They work together well and show good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and know that it is important to eat lots of fruit and vegetables. They work well with the community and are supportive to pupils from the local special school. They are prepared satisfactorily for their futures. Attendance is below average, although the school is working hard to improve it. It has improved slightly this year, despite a 'flu epidemic.

Pupils achieve well across the school. Standards are just below average overall, although in some year groups standards are well below average. This is because of the high number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in some classes. Children begin school by making good progress in the Foundation Stage, although standards remain below average by the end of the Reception Year. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress in relation to pupils' starting points. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good gains in their learning. In the 2006 national test, pupils in Year 6 achieved well in English, mathematics and science in relation to their prior attainment, despite standards being low. Standards in music have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now good, as a result of some specialised teaching.

Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement. Teachers plan their lessons well and make good use of assessment information to measure how well pupils are doing. There is a good curriculum in place with high quality enrichment experiences, such as the overnight residential trip that took place during the inspection for Year 2. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Pupils are safe and secure because the school works hard to ensure they are not at risk.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and other managers support her well. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is inadequate because pupils and parents do not know what is expected or how much progress is being made. Otherwise, monitoring is good and has resulted in improved reading skills for boys. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the management of the school. The good improvement since the last inspection shows that the school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the leadership and management role in relation to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities so that pupils' records are more easily understood by pupils and parents and so that their progress can be more easily measured.
- Work with pupils, parents and support services to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average by the end of Year 6. This is because of children's well-below-average attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage. Children make good progress

in Reception, particularly in their social development. By the time they enter Year 1, about a third of children have achieved the goals for their age, but standards remain below average. Pupils continue to make good progress. In 2006, pupils attained broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, standards vary according to pupils' attainment when they entered the school. The 2006 test results showed below-average standards despite pupils making good progress in relation to their starting points. Almost all groups of pupils achieve well during their time at the school because of good teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well in lessons because of high quality support from teaching assistants, although records of their achievements lack detail and are not easy for pupils to understand.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'I like this school' is typical of the very positive attitudes pupils have about all aspects of the school's work. Pupils make great strides in their personal development and, by the time that they leave, are confident and polite young people. As a consequence of the school's belief in them, they develop high self-esteem. They make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is evident in their good behaviour, especially in older pupils' classes. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds get on well with each other. Racist incidents are rare and pupils are confident that 'teachers sort out any bullying'. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility within the school and local community. This involves things like the work of the school council, various monitor duties and a litter clear-up in association with the neighbourhood wardens. Pupils are conscious of what they need to do to stay healthy and safe. They take advantage of the opportunities to exercise and know what constitutes a healthy diet, particularly enjoying the pre-school breakfast. They move about the extensive site in a safe and sensible way. These positive features are not fully reflected in pupils' attendance, which remains below average in spite of the school's efforts and some slight improvement this year. Pupils are developing satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills to equip them for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, leading to good progress in lessons by all groups of pupils. Teachers plan lessons well so that they run smoothly. They regularly assess what each pupil achieves. Teachers provide work that is suitable for each ability group and ensure that targets are challenging enough to enable higher- as well as lower-attaining pupils to do equally well. Teaching assistants are deployed well and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively in lessons, although the management of their records is not as good as it could be. Just occasionally, teachers do not manage the level of noise in classrooms. This impacts on concentration levels and, consequently, learning dips. In most lessons, relationships are harmonious and pupils do well. Assessment is used to identify the next steps to learning, and homework, particularly in Years 3 to 6, has a positive impact on achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

An interesting and exciting curriculum captures pupils' interest and helps them to achieve well. Work is planned carefully to meet each pupil's learning needs. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children enjoy learning through practical activities that prepare them well for developing their literacy, numeracy and other skills throughout Years 1 to 6. In these older classes, work in different subjects is brought alive by a range of visits and visitors. Pupils particularly enjoy the residential visits, such as the Year 2 trip to Kingswood. They also appreciate the wide range of after-school clubs. The school is working towards developing even more links between different subjects to make learning more relevant and to introduce the teaching of a modern foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'Teachers give you a chance and make you feel at home' is a comment by one pupil that typifies the good care, guidance and support given to all. Staff know the pupils and their families well and provide very good day-to-day pastoral care and support. This is exemplified in the very good procedures to help children settle easily into school, the rigorous monitoring of pupils' behaviour and the work of the learning mentor. All reasonable care is taken to ensure that pupils are kept safe at school. Regular safety checks are undertaken. Pupils and their parents are generally given clear information about what pupils need to do to move forward in their learning. However, the information given to parents of pupils with specific learning difficulties is not as clear as it could be and the targets set to help them improve are not easily understood by pupils or parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are evident in most aspects of school life. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school. She is well supported by the new senior management team and together they have created a caring and welcoming ethos in which all pupils are valued. There is a common sense of purpose among staff that is demonstrated by the way in which they have worked together to rigorously monitor pupils' achievements. This has resulted in improved provision for boys, in particular, through the introduction of more non-fiction texts and through focusing on practical aspects of mathematics and science. Boys' reading has consequently improved this year.

Through effective self-evaluation, including gathering the views of pupils and parents, leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is rightly aware of the need to improve standards in English, mathematics and science, and is working closely with support agencies, parents and other local schools to do this. Rigorous tracking of most pupils' progress means that challenging targets for improvement are set. These are well known by staff and pupils.

The leadership and management of learning difficulties and disabilities is inadequate, particularly in relation to documentation and record keeping. Consequently, although they achieve well in

lessons, the school does not have a clear enough picture of how well these pupils achieve over time, and appropriate information is not made available to pupils and parents.

The governing body works hard to support the school. The level of challenge that they provide to the leadership of the school is satisfactory. There has been good improvement in two of the three issues identified at the time of the last inspection. The school continues to work closely with parents and the school welfare service to improve attendance, and there are emerging signs that this is beginning to have an impact.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help on our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to all the interesting things you told us. We think yours is a good school.

You said that you enjoy school, although some of you do not come to school as often as you could. You make good progress and you achieve well. You behave well and work well in your groups. Teaching is good. Your teachers and other staff look after you well and take good care of you. Your headteacher and other leaders work hard to keep you safe and help you achieve. They lead the school well. There are two things that we think the school could do better and you could help to improve these.

- Those of you with learning difficulties and disabilities would benefit from clearer individual education plans and records so that you and your parents know what you need to do to improve.
- You must make sure you come to school as often as possible.

Thank you again for your help.