

Stirling Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106742
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	287598
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Clark

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Hoare
Headteacher	Miss J Wragg
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Prospect Place Doncaster South Yorkshire DN1 3QP
Telephone number	01302 363612
Fax number	01302 761594

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Stirling Primary is an averaged sized school in the centre of Doncaster in an area of high social and economical disadvantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average. Almost 60% of pupils speak English as an additional language. This is a very high proportion. There are 16 different languages spoken in school from many parts of European, Asian and African countries. Almost a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is above average. Many pupils join the school other than in the Reception year. In Year 6 over half the pupils joined the school after Year 3 and a quarter did not join until Year 6. This is typical of the school as a whole. Many of the pupils who join the school late have had little or no previous schooling and do not speak English.

The headteacher was appointed in April 2006 and the other three members of the senior leadership team were appointed in September 2006 after a period of substantial staff changes. The school has the Healthy School Award and Active Mark 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is needed in the standards and achievement of many groups of pupils.

Children start school with very low standards and, although they make a good start, standards are still significantly below expectations when they leave the Foundation Stage, especially in communication, language and literacy. Progress through the school has faltered in the past due to some inadequate teaching and learning and staff instability. Staffing difficulties have been rectified, particularly from the start of this school year, and the quality of teaching has begun to improve so that there is now clear evidence of better achievement, but there is still some way to go for the majority of pupils to achieve well enough by the end of each key stage. Consequently, standards in English, mathematics and science remain exceptionally low by the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Although the school provides an acceptable standard of education in some areas of its provision, significant weaknesses in pupils' achievement mean that its overall effectiveness is inadequate.

The school takes good care of its pupils with all their many different and challenging needs. Strong and effective support for the most vulnerable pupils, including many with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enables them to make satisfactory progress. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Although attendance levels are low pupils in school enjoy their lessons and are proud of their work. Behaviour is good and pupils are developing good levels of self-discipline. Pupils make well-informed choices to enjoy a healthy living and they have many opportunities to take on responsibilities such as the school council and buddy systems.

Although a significant proportion of lessons seen during the inspection were good, teaching over time has not been strong enough to improve standards effectively and there remains a legacy of underachievement that has yet to be eradicated. The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and it promotes personal development well. There is a strengthening focus on literacy and numeracy which is beneficial to pupils with English as an additional language and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. It is well planned and consequently is improving children's progress, particularly in social development and speaking and listening. The school has recognised the need to introduce more practical and creative activities throughout to more closely match the needs of all pupils.

The headteacher is a driving force. She has accurately identified the school's development needs and moved the school forward. The inclusive style of her leadership has led, in a very short time, to the development of a strong senior leadership team and considerable improvements to teaching and pupils' behaviour. The governors are supportive and are now well informed, but not yet fully involved in the evaluation of the school's performance. The recent improvements show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve levels of attendance.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it enables all pupils to achieve as well as they should.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

When children enter the Nursery their skills are much less well developed than is typically expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are still exceptionally low, especially in writing. This means that, overall, pupils make inadequate progress during their time at the school and it represents inadequate achievement. Boys did much worse than girls in the most recent national tests and overall targets were not met. However, pupils new to English made better progress than other pupils as did pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is because their progress has, over time, been more closely monitored and effective steps have been taken to provide additional support, thus enabling these pupils to progress satisfactorily. The progress the majority of pupils made has been significantly adversely affected by staff changes and inadequate teaching in the past. Now teachers are making better use of monitoring information for all pupils and there are indications of better progress. Another barrier to achievement is the fact that many pupils join and leave classes through the school year and less than half stay from Reception to Year 6. Those that are in school the longest make the best progress. Boys do less well than girls because the curriculum is not always practical and challenging enough for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Parents and pupils agree that the new procedures to manage behaviour and the strong leadership from the headteacher means that pupils are well behaved and beginning to take more responsibility for their own conduct. Pupils are thoughtful and eager to please. Steps taken to eliminate bullying are effective. In particular pupils find the support of their friends through the school council is very helpful in helping them resolve behavioural or emotional issues. Pupils work together well regardless of background. They are especially good at welcoming and supporting pupils who start their class at different times of the year, often translating for them when English is not their first language. Pupils enjoy their education and are beginning to take responsibility and initiative in their learning as this is reflected increasingly in the style of teaching. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit, safe and healthy and choose healthy options for their lunches and snacks. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. However, attendance is inadequate and this adversely affects some pupils' progress. Pupils' underachievement in literacy and numeracy means that they are not prepared adequately for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are beginning to be ironed out by accelerated staff training and better sharing of good practice. As a result, teaching and learning are now satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge that they can make a difference is growing, although there are still too many occasions when teachers play safe and do not challenge and engage pupils enough. When that happens pupils' learning slows considerably. Improvements mean that

teachers now consistently share the objectives of the lesson well with pupils and refer to them throughout the lessons. As a result pupils have a better understanding of their own learning and how they can make good progress. Teachers make certain that work set is at the right level for the many different abilities of pupils. However, they do not always reinforce this with questions that make pupils think sufficiently deeply and not all the work is as practical and exciting as it could be.

Good relationships and a calm approach aid pupils' learning, particularly for the most vulnerable. Well-trained teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well and there is good first language support for pupils with English as an additional language which helps accelerate their early progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Strong steps have recently been taken by the senior leadership to ensure that planning for English and mathematics is satisfactory and at the heart of the drive to improve achievement. The planning for reading is showing improvements. New procedures for writing are being robustly trialled in Year 6 but have yet to be devolved through the school. Strengths in the new procedures are the clear guidance for next steps in learning and the involvement of pupils. Although there are improvements there is still too little use of information and communication technology and practical activities to engage all learners enough to accelerate progress. Some lessons are too long so the pace of learning is not sharp enough. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from an effective curriculum which focuses on their personal development and language needs. Pupils' personal development is also promoted well through circle time, 'Crucial Crew' and a good range of clubs and out of school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The school takes good care of its pupils and makes good provision for their social and emotional development. Parents have full confidence that their children are properly cared for and recognise that behaviour has improved. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are appropriate. Attendance is closely monitored and the reason for absence is rigorously pursued. The school is exploring ways of better informing parents of the importance of good attendance. The induction of new pupils, many of whom are new to the country, is particularly strong. It is sensitive and well planned and this is reflected in the support for their special learning needs that they receive from the start. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is continuous and backed by carefully prepared programmes of work which help them to achieve better than some other groups of learners. Pupils who have personal difficulties have many opportunities to share their concerns with staff. This helps them approach their learning in a settled way. The sound systems to track progress have a positive impact on the learning needs of the most vulnerable pupils and are now helping to raise the quality of education and improve teaching.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors are determined to bring about swift change and have gained the respect and support of the staff. The senior leadership has quickly formed into a strong unit for change. The improvement planning, under the purposeful leadership of the new headteacher, is very well thought out and is changing the culture of the school. It has already led to significant improvements to better meet the pupils' social and academic needs. The impact, on pupils' behaviour for example, is enabling pupils to learn at an increased rate. Other initiatives are at an early stage of development and although they are having some impact they are not yet fully embedded into school practice. Priorities in the school improvement plan identify exactly what needs to be done to a precise timescale and exact costs. This has meant that within a year the headteacher has halved the excessive financial reserves the school had built up since the last inspection and used funding to secure good staffing and improve learning resources. Issues for improvement have not all been dealt with over time, particularly the need to raise standards. The headteacher clearly has the capability to lead improvement and senior leadership and governors give her satisfactory support.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your kindness when we visited your school. We would like to tell you about the findings from the inspection. We found that you enjoy school and that everyone is working hard. Nonetheless, there is much more to do to make the school a better place for you.

A start has been made and much is satisfactory and your behaviour is good. There are some weaknesses to be smoothed out to help you learn as well as you could do. Because of this, inspectors will visit the school in six to eight months to check that everything is improving. They will look especially to see how well the school has helped you improve the standards that you reach, how quickly you learn and how regularly you attend school.

The headteacher knows just what needs to be done and everyone is willing to help. You can contribute by always trying your best. Your families can help by making sure you come to school every day.