



Newtown CofE Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 123490
Local Authority Shropshire
Inspection number 292685
Inspection date 8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newtown
School category	Voluntary controlled		Wem
Age range of pupils	3-11		Shrewsbury SY4 5NU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01939 233353
Number on roll (school)	142	Fax number	01939 233353
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Paul Haycox
		Headteacher	Christine Brown
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002		

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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller school than average. There is a wide social mix among pupils. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of ability that are broadly typical for their age, except in their social and language development, which are lower. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Nearly all children attend the rural nursery that is based within the school before they start in the Reception year.

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 which has improved in past years. Good leadership and management have enabled the school to tackle weaknesses in pupils' attainment and aspects of governance in order to improve the quality of education for all pupils. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach above-average standards in English and mathematics. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are above average in English, and well above in science. In mathematics they are broadly average as some more-able pupils do not always achieve well enough and not all pupils are confident in their investigative skills. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress and achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is typically effective throughout the school. The Foundation Stage is good. Children get off to a flying start because of the effective provision in the Nursery and a smooth transfer to the Reception and Year 1 class. Good teaching and interesting activities fire children's imagination and they work very well together. The majority exceed the expected standards in nearly all areas of learning. Teaching is typically good in Years 1 to 6, though not yet consistently so between the junior classes. Pupils, particularly the more able in mathematics, are not always given work or set challenges that extend them fully in every class.

Pupils' well-being and personal development are good. Pupils really enjoy school and their behaviour is exemplary. The good curriculum is interesting and varied. It stimulates their interest in learning by providing good links between subjects and promoting good practical work in design and technology (DT), for example. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils' good level of care and guidance from the Nursery onwards ensures their health, safety and security. It shows in pupils feeling safe, having mature attitudes and wanting to learn.

The leadership and management are now good. An informed and committed senior staff team are always on the lookout to make things better, such as improving pupils' writing further and increasing their responsibility for the learning process. They are supported by governors who are keen to move the school forward, often using feedback from parents to help shape priorities for action. The school is well placed to improve further. As a parent commented, 'I feel very lucky that my local rural school is so good'. This reflects the view of the vast majority of parents, who are very pleased with the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' investigative skills in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 to help them tackle everyday problems more confidently.
- Ensure that pupils in Years 3 to 6, particularly those who are more able, are given suitably challenging work to stretch their abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Their progress is good in the Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 to 6. This is due to effective teaching, motivated pupils and an interesting curriculum. In nearly all aspects, the majority exceed the expected levels when they start Year 1. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, mathematics and science. They are well above in writing. In the 2006 tests for Year 6 pupils, standards in English were above average and well above in science. In contrast, they were broadly average in mathematics. Although current work indicates standards are rising in mathematics, pupils' investigative skills, particularly for the most able, lag behind their quick and accurate calculation skills. Pupils achieve well in their writing and particularly so in science, ICT and DT work. Most pupils meet the challenging targets set for them, which prepares them confidently for their next stage of education. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well as their difficulties are quickly recognised and then addressed with good levels of support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school ensures that pupils' well-being is good, as is their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, encouraged by the school's recent 'You can do it!' programme. As one said, 'I enjoy knowing how to work smarter'. This helps to prepare them well for their next stage of learning. Pupils enjoy school, although their attendance is satisfactory. Some parents persist in taking holidays in termtime, despite the school's best efforts to reduce this. The school council contributes effectively to initiatives such as preventing bullying and reducing accident 'black spots' in the playground. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and secure. Pupils are aware of healthy-eating options and lifestyles, but most admit they don't always make sensible eating choices. Many extend their playtime activities by attending extra sports clubs. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils see it as their duty to help their classmates and that is particularly noticeable in their supporting role as 'playground friends.' Pupils also show their concern for others by involving themselves keenly in fundraising for a number of national and local charities. Pupils are well prepared for their future, with their abilities in basic skills contributing positively to their self-confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is typically good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. It is good overall in Years 3 to 6 but there is more variation here in the quality of teaching than in the infant classes.

Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their attitudes to work. Pupils respond well to these expectations. However some pupils, particularly the more able, are not always stretched with sufficiently challenging work or by being asked more probing questions. Teaching assistants provide good additional support, especially for pupils with learning difficulties. Imaginative topic work on events such as, the 'Great Fire of London' or the 'Battle of Hastings', motivates and enthuses pupils. Teachers also make good use of interactive whiteboards to make activities more appealing. The quality of work in subjects such as DT and art reflects good teaching. Teachers assess pupils regularly, giving them clear guidance to help them improve, with some of the best marking in English and mathematical work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school plans a good range of activities which ensures pupils' good development in both academic and practical skills. The school enjoys a good reputation in DT work. There is a strong commitment to pupils' enjoyment and well-being, along with preparation for their future learning and citizenship. There are examples of particularly successful curriculum planning, which captures the interest of pupils and encourages them to write confidently and improve their basic skills. This was seen, for example, in pupils' imaginary letters written as part of their 'Battle of Hastings' topic. Some indoor physical activities are constrained by having a small hall space, but provision for outdoor games is well planned. The Reception and Year 1 provision is good, which encourages pupils to flourish in most areas. In Years 1 to 6, 'once a week' problem-solving activities in mathematics are enjoyed by pupils, but their improving skills are not consistently applied regularly to investigational work. Improved facilities and links developed with other schools have helped to address past weaknesses in the use of ICT. A very good range of extra-curricular clubs, some run by coaches and members of the local community, helps enrich class activities. A good range of visits away from school is regularly arranged which contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Consistently good care, guidance and support lie at the heart of pupils' good achievement and personal development. There are thorough arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Pupils say they feel able to talk to any member of staff and like using the 'worry box' to write down concerns, if they prefer, to which the school responds promptly. Parents typically describe the school as having a 'very caring environment'. Simple 'buddy' systems and regular advice about preventing bullying help pupils feel settled and safe. The school has taken effective action since the last inspection to improve its monitoring of health and safety aspects, which are now good. There are effective systems for tracking pupils' personal and academic progress. As a result, staff quickly noticed a decline in results for number work.

Most pupils are aware of their targets, particularly in English and mathematics, but less so in other subjects. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership to staff and pupils. As a result, a number of improvements have been made since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment is now generally higher and ways of keeping a check on progress are wider ranging and more effective. Responsibilities are shared well to maximise staff expertise. The quality of teaching is monitored effectively by senior staff in most cases, but what teachers could do to improve learning further is not always pinpointed. The school often seeks the views of parents and pupils and has, for example, produced a homework guide for parents as a result. Governors give effective levels of support. They are closely involved with the school's effective and accurate self-evaluation processes. Their 'steering group', made up of governors and senior staff, is invaluable in keeping the governing body well informed. They are therefore able to both support and also to challenge proposals where necessary. Governors are pro-active in seeking to improve the hall accommodation. The capacity to improve further is good, with the good teamwork in the school an important contributory factor in raising standards.

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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?	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	2
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	1
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	3
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?	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.

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	2
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	2
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 making our visit to your school so enjoyable. We think you have a good school. The headteacher, staff and governors lead and manage the school well.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You work very hard to make Newtown a good school.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do.
- You make good progress in your work and reach above-average standards by the time you leave.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle in well and quickly feel at home.
- Teaching is generally good, but sometimes it should stretch your thinking even more.
- The activities you do in lessons like your 'Battle of Hastings' topic are really interesting.
- You know about keeping fit and active but some of you need to remember that eating sensibly is good too.
- You all behave brilliantly and the school helps you become very mature and sensible.
- Your involvement with local events in the community is good.
- Your willingness to help others by fund raising is really encouraging.

I have asked the school to improve these things:

- Help you do more investigative maths work to help solve some tougher 'real life' problems.
- Ask the teachers in Years 3 to 6 to really stretch your thinking more, especially for those who find some work too easy.