

John Fletcher Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123526
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	292698
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Wild
Headteacher	Peter Mandelstam
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2002
School address	Upper Road Madeley Telford TF7 5DL
Telephone number	01952 388188
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves a residential area on the edge of Telford which contains a mix of social and privately owned housing. There are pockets of considerable deprivation in the locality. Almost all pupils are White British, with others being of Indian heritage or mixed White and Black Caribbean. Very few do not speak English at home. The school has had to cope with some staffing problems as they have found it difficult to replace full-time staff and also find cover for maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Parents are very positive about the school and say such things as, 'The school turns out happy, sensible and well-rounded individuals.' These views are well founded as the school is providing a satisfactory education and has a number of good features. Despite the staffing difficulties, which have had a negative effect on pupils' progress in Years 4 and 5, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They reach average standards by the time they leave, although standards in writing and mathematics are not as good as those in reading and science.

Leaders have made every effort to minimise the impact of the staffing difficulties, by providing extra support in the affected classes, for instance. This is an example of the school's good leadership and management. Very thorough systems have been initiated to evaluate the effectiveness of pupils' learning and the school's provision. Leaders therefore have a very clear view of successes and where improvements need to be made. For example, the current school improvement plan has raising standards in writing and mathematics as priorities. Progress is already improving in these two subjects. Good features of the improvement plan are the involvement of parents in a planning and review meeting and the excellent summary prepared for pupils and parents.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are examples of good teaching in all year groups. However, there is a lack of consistency and time is sometimes used unproductively. There are particularly good relationships in classes and these result in pupils working hard and wanting to succeed. A further key feature of pupils' improving progress is the very thorough system of assessment and target setting. Pupils know very clearly what they need to learn next. This is typical of the good care, guidance and support provided for pupils. Parents appreciate this and say such things as, 'Staff are very caring and have only the pupils' best interests at heart.' This is resulting in pupils' good personal development and well-being. They behave well, work hard and are developing into mature and responsible citizens.

The way the good curriculum has been planned is further evidence of the thoughtful way that development takes place in this school. Very thorough analysis is carried out and the curriculum has been adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, all visits and visitors are carefully planned to support particular curriculum topics and are timed at the most useful point in the topic. The school has recognised the need to give pupils a wider range of experiences on which to base their writing and to place greater emphasis on developing calculation skills in mathematics.

Bearing in mind the good progress made since the previous inspection, the very thorough analysis carried out of the school's effectiveness, the shared commitment to continuous improvement, and the now greater stability in staffing, the school is well placed to continue on its upward path.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by increasing the range of stimuli for pupils so that they can write with first-hand knowledge.
- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' skills in both written and mental calculation.
- Improve the consistency of teaching by providing more opportunities for best practice to be shared.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry varies from year to year. The current Year 6 attained average scores when they took the national tests in Year 2. Pupils reach average standards by the time they leave and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' progress has declined over the last couple of years, largely because of some staffing problems in Years 4 and 5. The school has recognised this and put in place successful strategies that are beginning to result in better progress.

The school has correctly identified that standards in writing and some aspects of mathematics are not as high as they should be. For instance, pupils' skills in calculation, both mental and written, are not as good as their abilities in other areas of mathematics. Effective strategies have been put in place to address this and progress in mathematics is improving. Pupils' writing is not based sufficiently on their own experiences. The school is therefore putting in place a range of initiatives, such as reading to all pupils every day and increasing the number of visits. This is beginning to have an effect on improving pupils' writing. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same progress as their classmates as clear individual plans are made for their learning. The pupils who do not speak English at home are integrated well and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy school, and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance, their good behaviour in lessons and around school, and enthusiasm to take part in all school activities. They say the school is a happy place to be, where everyone gets on well together and 'lessons are fun'. Parents say that their children are very happy at school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They recognise the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and can confidently explain the exact procedures to follow if the fire alarm goes off, for example. Members of the school council take their responsibilities in 'helping to run the school' seriously. Because they have identified the need for healthy lifestyles, pupils have been involved in the provision of water bottles and in discussions about improving school meals. Despite this, not all lunch boxes reflect the school's drive for healthy eating. Each year, a sale for charity is organised, giving all pupils opportunities to develop enterprise skills, as well as an awareness of the needs of others. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through involvement in local events such as the Madeley Spring Clean.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are a number of good features to lessons. The most important in aiding pupils' progress is teachers' good knowledge of what pupils need to learn next. The thorough systems of assessment and setting targets mean that there is almost always a good range of activities so that pupils have work that is closely matched to their abilities. However, time is sometimes wasted and learning slows, for example, when all pupils have to sit and listen to the introductions for the tasks for all groups. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful and constructive, and gives them a clear indication of what they need to do to improve.

Teachers create an orderly and calm working atmosphere and pupils respond well to this and work hard. Teachers use a good variety of methods to motivate pupils. For instance, the interactive whiteboards are generally used well to hold pupils' interest and concentration. There are examples of very good practice in some classes as well as examples of good teaching in all year groups. However, although greater consistency is now becoming established, inconsistencies remain and there are insufficient opportunities for best practice to be observed and shared with other teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, although focused well on building key skills. It is made more interesting with themed weeks, for example, in art. All pupils also perform each year in productions, such as the recent very successful Year 5 performances of Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Staff plan together well, developing a range of imaginative topics. Year 4 pupils clearly enjoyed the opportunities to learn some Latin and make money bags as part of their topic on Ancient Rome.

Although these are still developing, the links between subjects have a positive impact on pupils' learning, for example, in the use of information and communication technology, which pupils enjoy. Planning is responsive to areas identified for improvement. In recognition of the importance of developing good speaking and listening skills to improve writing, the curriculum includes drama. More opportunities are being provided to develop calculation skills. While the daily reading session is beginning to prove effective in promoting pupils' enjoyment in books, texts are not always sufficiently carefully chosen. The curriculum is further enriched by a very good range of trips, visits and clubs, which are effective in engaging pupils' interests and talents, and promoting their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care given to their children, praising the 'exceptional care and support of the headteacher and all staff.' Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are well established, and rigorous systems are in place to deal with risk assessment, accidents and emergencies.

Academic guidance and support for pupils is good. The tracking of pupils' progress is rigorous and enables the school to intervene swiftly if pupils are falling behind. However, these systems have only recently begun to be used to challenge the more able pupils. Those experiencing problems are quickly identified and receive good support from staff, who work with them and their families. Parents regard staff as 'very approachable and good at recognising individual needs.' Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to extending pupils' learning and developing their self-confidence in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leadership team provides a strong sense of direction for the school. The headteacher has delegated well so that there is a shared sense of accountability and this is now further enhanced by greater staffing stability. Governors play a full part in this and their role as critical

friends is particularly well developed. The leadership team has initiated some particularly thorough systems. For example, the relatively new refinements to the assessment procedures are being used well so that pupils know exactly what they need to learn next, and this is beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' progress.

The procedures for checking on the effectiveness of the school's provision are thorough and involve parents, pupils and governors as well as all staff. For example, parents were fully involved in discussions on changes to the school day and pupils were instrumental in changes made to the lunchtime routine. Action taken to address identified weaknesses is effective, for example, the impact of strategies to address weaknesses in writing and calculation skills. The strong links with parents are particularly fruitful in involving them in aiding their children's learning. There is a clear programme for monitoring pupils' learning, which has recently been refined and is now being used by all subject co-ordinators. This is beginning to lead to the identification and addressing of whole school issues in subjects other than English and mathematics.

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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 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?	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	2
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	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?	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	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	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	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

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

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school this week. We very much enjoyed our visit and talking with so many of you, because you were really polite and proud of your school. You obviously enjoy school and it is not difficult to see why as, although your school is satisfactory, it has a number of good features. We particularly liked watching part of the Year 5 production of Joseph.

We thought that the best things about your school were:

- You are well behaved and work hard and are growing up into sensible and responsible young people.
- All adults look after you very well.
- The school plans interesting work in all subjects for you. Visits, visitors and after-school clubs are an important part of this.
- Your headteacher and staff know clearly how to improve the school.
- Your targets tell you exactly how to improve your work and help teachers plan what you need to learn next.

We think the following things could be improved:

- Your standards in writing are not as good as your standards in reading as you don't write about what you really know often enough.
- Your standards in maths are not as good as your standards in science as you need to improve your calculation skills, including your mental maths.
- Some lessons are not as good as others and we have suggested that teachers learn from the best lessons so that all lessons are good.