



Squirrel Hayes First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124062
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292877
Inspection dates 16–17 November 2006
Reporting inspector Usha Devi

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Springfield Road
School category	Community		Biddulph
Age range of pupils	3–9		Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 297886
Number on roll (school)	158	Fax number	01782 297946
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sue Harper
		Headteacher	Jean Betts
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–9	16–17 November 2006	292877

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Squirrel Hayes is a smaller than average school that caters for pupils from Nursery to Year 4. The school is situated in a socially disadvantaged area of Biddulph. Most of the pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The outdoor learning area is secure and the classrooms are well organised and stimulating to promote creativity and independence. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress although standards remain below average when they enter Year 1. Standards are well below average in Years 1 to 4 and most pupils make unsatisfactory progress. The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are well behaved and treat each other with respect. They speak about their work with confidence, know the importance of leading healthy and active lifestyles, and enjoy taking part in a wide range of after school clubs. The extensive choice is much appreciated by pupils and parents. As one parent put it, 'The after-school clubs are excellent!' The quality of care and support for pupils is good and they are well looked after. The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Parents are very positive about the school. One parent said, 'This school is a little community where all teachers and children respect one another.' Teaching and learning are inadequate over time because the pace of learning is too slow and the expectations of pupils' capabilities are not high enough. Assessment information is not used well enough to plan tasks that will meet the needs of different learners. As a result, there is a significant legacy of underachievement in the school. Parents appreciate the high level of care the headteacher provides. The headteacher, governors and staff are supportive of each other. Relationships with parents and the community are good. Initiatives to raise pupils' achievement are in place but are not effectively adapted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The monitoring of teaching and learning across the school has not been sufficiently focused on tackling underachievement and increasing the rate of pupils' progress. Self-evaluation is not rigorous enough or sufficiently accurate. The pace at which underachievement is being tackled and limitations in monitoring and evaluation procedures demonstrate that the school does not have the capacity to bring about further improvement. The school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection and it does not give value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase rates of pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils are suitably challenged and their differing needs are met.
- More rigorously evaluate and monitor the school's work to bring about rapid improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The pupils do not achieve as well as they should. From their low starting points on entry, children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Their progress from Years 1 to 4 is unsatisfactory and standards are well below average. Although the percentage of pupils reaching the levels expected for their age in reading and mathematics show a steady increase since 2003, the Year 2 teacher assessments in 2005 were significantly below national averages in writing and mathematics and below national averages in reading. In 2006, the proportion of pupils who reached nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2 dipped in reading and mathematics although results in writing improved. The school's assessment information shows that in reading, writing and mathematics a significant number of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the more able, underachieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Visitors are quick to point out that Squirrel Hayes is a happy school where there are lots of smiles. As one parent states, 'All staff command the respect of children at the same time as having their affection.' School council members are proud of their involvement in making decisions, which benefit all pupils. They are particularly pleased with the part they played in the development of the adventure play area, known as 'Jungle Jim'. Play leaders make a positive contribution to behaviour at lunchtimes. They are carefully selected for their jobs following a letter of application. This selection process is helping to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education. There is very little bullying but when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. The school works hard to promote its improving attendance and punctuality, such as through its popular breakfast club. One parent comments 'how amazing it is to see how quickly a noisy hall falls silent' at successful assemblies which help promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe and having a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning over time is inadequate because the pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to do their best and therefore they underachieve. The teachers and support staff provide pupils with a safe and welcoming environment where good relationships are developed. Assessment data are collected and discussed by staff on a regular basis, but this information is not used effectively to plan work that accelerates progress and meets the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils are aware of targets to help improve their learning and the steps needed to achieve them but

some find them too easy. Teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning by providing support for individuals and groups, but they are not effectively used during the introductions to lessons. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and is not always helping pupils to make progress. Comments are sometimes too general and do not provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils. The youngest children get off to a sound start in the Foundation Stage because they have some interesting and exciting things to do. In Years 1 to 4, pupils develop knowledge and understanding too slowly because work is not always well matched to their different learning needs. Information and communication technology, mathematical and literacy skills are becoming increasingly used to support work in other subjects. Personal and social development is given strong emphasis and lies at the heart of the school's work. Visits to Formby and Gladstone Pottery Museum, and visitors, such as the 'Animal Man' who brings in to school a range of exotic animals, help to bring learning to life. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a good range of popular clubs and activities, such as gardening, computing, games and sign language. These rich experiences help pupils develop healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

While the care and support provided by the school are good, the procedures for the academic support of the pupils lack sufficient rigour. Pastoral care is of a high quality with many successful initiatives established, such as the nurture room for the most vulnerable. This helps to keep pupils safe and happy. The recent achievement of the Inclusion Quality Mark provides clear evidence of the school's developing good practice in this area. Health and safety systems are good. Procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm are rigorous and embedded in the school's work. The school has effective arrangements for ensuring that all new staff are appropriately vetted. The school provides good information for parents. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well organised, with most teaching assistants supporting these pupils adequately. However, pupils generally are not sufficiently involved in setting and regularly reviewing their own targets and this is a barrier to them achieving more highly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. While staff work well as a team to ensure that pupils' personal development is good and their care is a high priority, leaders and managers do not place enough emphasis on raising the pupils' standards and

achievement at a fast enough rate. The school's selfevaluation of its own performance is inadequate because it does not have an accurate view of its weaknesses or make the necessary connections between the quality of its provision and the impact this has on pupils' learning. The extent of pupils' underachievement identified in the school's own data has not been tackled with determined and urgent action. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work lack rigour and do not provide staff with clear feedback as to what needs to be improved. Senior staff monitor the quality of lessons and give staff advice but their evaluations are not sufficiently focused on accelerating pupils' progress and improving the quality of teaching. The recently appointed literacy and numeracy coordinators are keen and enthusiastic but do not yet have the skills required to make a significant contribution to school improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school but do not hold the school's leaders and managers to account.

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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?	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	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
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	4

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	3

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
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	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons. You are very friendly, kind and polite towards each other, the teachers and other adults who work with you. You enjoyed sharing your work with us and telling us how much you appreciate visiting different places and taking part in the after school clubs such as gardening, tri golf and learning sign language. Your school council does a good job and works hard to improve things, like setting up 'Jungle Jim' in the playground. Your headteacher, teachers and all the other adults in school work hard to make sure that you are safe and that you treat each other with respect. We have asked Mrs Betts, the staff and governing body to help you make even better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that the work they give you always helps you learn as well as you can. You can help your teachers by telling them if you find your work too easy. We have also asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to look carefully and regularly at how well you are doing so that you make quicker progress. Other inspectors will visit your school regularly to see how you are getting on. We hope that you will do all you can to help your teachers improve your school. We wish you all the very best for the future.