



West Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124072
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292882
Inspection dates 15–16 January 2007
Reporting inspector Gerald Griffin

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | High Mount Street |
| School category | Community | | Hednesford |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | Cannock WS12 4BH |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01543 512200 |
| Number on roll (school) | 308 | Fax number | 01543 512201 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Jane Parkes |
| | | Headteacher | Shaun Miles |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 February 2003 | | |

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| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 3–11 | 15–16 January 2007 | 292882 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of considerable economic hardship. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to the national average. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards. The headteacher has been in post for two years. A play group and out of school care are provided on site for the children. These provisions are externally managed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

West Hill Primary is a satisfactory school. The school is rapidly improving under the headteacher's very good leadership; he provides clear drive, direction and purpose. The recent history of low standards, underachievement and poor behaviour is being successfully redressed through detailed planning and improvement strategies that are enthusiastically implemented by staff. Standards in all years are below average but are improving, which represents satisfactory achievement over pupils' starting points. Progress in English is good because of successful strategies to improve reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is steady but not as good as that in English because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise mental arithmetic skills and solve mathematical problems. Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Classes are orderly and relationships are positive. As a result, pupils' behaviour is good and they are keen to learn. However, teachers do not consistently provide feedback to ensure pupils know what they need to do to further improve their work, which means the pace of learning sometimes slows.

Pupils' personal development is good and they thrive in the school's happy atmosphere. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to be healthy and put this into practice in their choice of food and through taking frequent exercise. Pupils' good community involvement is shown by their readiness to accept responsibility as monitors and their support for a range of charities and participation in the school council. The curriculum is good and promotes pupils' personal development through activities such as well-attended sports clubs and regular visits to places of interest. It promotes high standards in music, and pupils talk with real enthusiasm about the very good opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument and performing in the school choir and steel band.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Parents are very happy with the quality of pastoral care the school provides. Typically, they say: 'The teachers are approachable and supportive and my child is very happy at school'. The academic targets that the school set for pupils are appropriate and the procedures to check their progress towards meeting them are robust. The guidance and support given to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are satisfactory and ensure that they make sound progress in relation to their individual targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-evaluation ensures the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Many weaknesses, such as standards of writing, have been effectively and quickly rectified. The pace of improvements in the Foundation Stage has not been as rapid; shortcomings in curricular planning and assessment have not been tackled as effectively as they have in the rest of the school. The recent improvements show the school has good capacity to make further gains.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics by giving greater emphasis to developing their skills of mental calculation and problem solving.
- Ensure pupils know what they need to do to further improve their work.
- Quicken the pace of improvement in the Foundation Stage by ensuring that assessment is consistent and used effectively to plan a curriculum that builds on what the children have already learned.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average by the time pupils leave school and achievement is satisfactory for all groups, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Satisfactory provision in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children make sound progress, especially in their personal and social development. Although many make considerable gains, few children reach the expected standards for their age. Pupils' performance in the 2006 national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 was below the national average. Whilst the school met its targets, the legacy of underachievement in past years depressed the results.

Progress has improved in English because the school's drive to improve pupils' reading, spelling and sentence construction has been successful. Progress in mathematics is average but not quite as good as that in English. This is because pupils' skills in mental calculations and applying their knowledge of number in investigations are not well developed. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to improve these qualities. In science, pupils make sound gains in the knowledge and understanding of facts and in experimental skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respect and value each other and the world around them. They are very polite to each other and to adults. Pupils' good behaviour comes from a clear understanding of right and wrong. Their good cultural development is especially seen in music, but pupils' appreciation of their place in a multicultural society, through their understanding of different faiths, is not so marked.

Pupils feel safe and secure and report that the very rare incidences of bullying are effectively resolved. They are confident that they can approach a member of staff if they have a worry, knowing their concerns will be quickly dealt with. Pupils' good understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle is based on sound scientific knowledge. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and are particularly enthusiastic about the good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very keen to help others and their community. Their standards in literacy and numeracy and their well-developed

information and communication technology (ICT) skills provide pupils with a satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have good subject knowledge, provide clear explanations and make lessons interesting. Teachers utilise ICT resources well to engage pupils. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and work hard. Teaching is improving as a result of the school's focus on developing teaching so that it encompasses different styles of learning. For example, the use of discussion is proving successful in helping pupils understand the subject matter; discussions are lively and accelerate pupils' progress through challenging questions. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils to clarify and extend their ideas with their 'talk partners'. Teachers do not always use marking and other feedback to tell pupils how they can raise the standard of their work. As a result, pupils are not always fully stretched. Teaching assistants are well informed and ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities participate fully in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. The satisfactory Nursery and Reception curriculum provides an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-led activities, but too few outdoor activities are planned. This restricts the children's growing appreciation of the world around them.

Music provision is excellent and gives pupils many opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem through playing instruments and singing. Throughout the school, provision for physical development is good. Swimming, popular sports clubs and physical education lessons support pupils' very good efforts to keep fit. Regular visits to places of interest, such as museums, broaden pupils' horizons and raise their aspirations. Changes to the English curriculum have improved standards in reading and writing. The school is providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in mental mathematics and apply their knowledge but it is too early to judge if these are successful.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, support and guidance. Sensitive support and care is provided for pupils with learning difficulties or medical problems. This enables these pupils to participate fully in lessons and make satisfactory progress. The school makes good use of external agencies and specialists to promote pupils' welfare when the need arises. Child protection procedures and health and safety arrangements are robust. Attendance has greatly improved over the last two years and it is now average.

The school continues to use effective measures, such as rewards, to further improve attendance rates.

Procedures to assess pupils' work and track their progress are satisfactory. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is not consistently accurate. As a result, the school is not always clear about the progress children make. This means that curriculum planning is not always effective in building on what the children have already learned and preparing them well for Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are now largely meeting the challenging targets set for them. However, pupils are not always clear as to what their academic targets are and how they can improve their work to meet them. The school provides very effective additional support, through booster classes, for individual pupils who under-perform and this is having a positive impact on rising standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides very clear leadership that ensures that pupils make good gains in their personal development. He has effectively tackled the legacy of low standards and underachievement with zeal, and as a consequence, standards have significantly improved over a short period of time. He is well supported by senior managers and other staff who have high expectations for pupils and strive to do their very best for them. The school's accurate view of its strengths and areas for development stems from the systematic checking of its performance by senior managers and subject leaders. Weaknesses have been tackled well. The measures to improve teachers' behaviour management have been effective in improving the quality of learning. When the school recognised that reading standards were too low, well-judged action was taken to improve the range of reading matter available to pupils and to provide more opportunities for them to discuss the meaning of what they read. As a result, standards in reading have risen and are now similar to those in writing. The pace of improvement has been rapid in Years 1 to 6 and here standards are rising quickly. The rate of improvement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but not as fast, especially in aspects of the curriculum and assessment.

The governing body provides the headteacher with enthusiastic support. Through their developing understanding of data, governors are asking searching questions about standards and the progress of pupils. The record of improvements since the last inspection and clear strategic planning that is identifying the right priorities show that the school has a good capacity to get even better.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

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| 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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 3 |

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? | 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 welcoming us to your school and being so friendly. You clearly enjoy being in a school where you get on with each other very well. We enjoyed our conversations with you about your work and the other things that you do at school. The school is improving rapidly and provides you with a satisfactory education.

Here are some of the 'highlights':

- you work hard in your lessons
- your behaviour is good
- you have a strong commitment to being healthy
- music is very good and you enjoy practising and performing in the choir and in bands
- you have a very interesting range of clubs which most of you attend
- you are making good progress in reading and writing
- all the staff care for you very well
- the headteacher, staff and governors are working together well to make the school even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- improve your mathematics by making sure you have more practice at mental arithmetic and problem solving
- keep you informed about how you can improve your work
- make sure improvements in the Nursery and Reception classes are as rapid as they are in the rest of the school.

Best wishes for your future and the future of the school.