



Howard Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124080
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 292885
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Gerald Griffin AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Square
School category	Community		Elford
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 9DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01827 383292
Number on roll	83	Fax number	01827 383292
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Shorthouse
Date of previous inspection	11 November 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Carol Eyley

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Howard Primary is a three class school serving the village of Elford near Tamworth. It is much smaller than the average primary school. There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' standards on entry are average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average as is the number claiming free school meals. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Howard Primary is a satisfactory school. The new headteacher is providing the school with clear direction and purpose and is setting challenging targets for improvement. She has already put in place a number of initiatives to raise standards although it is too early to judge their effectiveness. However, both parents and pupils agree that the school is much improved since her arrival. The school's leadership and management is satisfactory overall and its own evaluation of its effectiveness and qualities is accurate. Under the new leadership the drive to improve standards, supported well by an effective governing body, provides the capacity to make further improvements. Pupils' attain average standards overall by the time they leave for secondary school and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics are very high and have been so for the past three years because pupils are set very challenging work. Standards in writing were a relative weakness at the last report and remain so because pupils do not sufficiently practise writing skills learned in their English lessons in other subjects. Provision in the Foundation stage is satisfactory and children attain average standards when they finish Reception. Behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are extremely polite and considerate to each other and to adults. Pupils enjoy lessons and the many extra-curricular activities provided. They feel safe and very well cared for and appreciate being in a small school. They are very proud of their school and one Year 6 pupil said, 'It's fun here; we all know each other and look after each other. School is like a big family.' Relationships with adults are excellent because teachers manage classes well, and as a result pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. Teaching assistants are effectively used enabling all pupils to take part in lessons. However, teachers do not consistently use the outcome of assessment to guide their planning of challenging work. Parents rightly feel that the school has good care arrangements. The school works well with the local high school and support agencies. The few vulnerable children are well provided for. While pupils know their targets the school does not provide them with enough direction as to how they can improve their work further. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last report because standards have risen overall and appropriate steps have been taken to improve assessment procedures.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen planning to raise standards of writing.
- Ensure teachers consistently use the results of tests and other assessments to plan challenging work for pupils.
- Always provide feedback to show pupils how they can improve their work further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and pupils leave for secondary school with average standards overall. The school reached its challenging targets for Year 6 in 2005. All

pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make similar progress overall. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and nearly all reach the expected national standards. Their physical development is promoted well through lessons such as dance, taught by specialists from the local high school. Standards remain average at the end of Year 2. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 given their starting point. Best progress is made in reading, shown by pupils' good expression when they read out loud, because good use is made of the library. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress overall in Years 3 to 6, but they make exceptional progress in mathematics in Years 4 to 6 and standards are very high. This is because very good mathematics teaching develops pupils' understanding of difficult concepts very well, enabling them to expertly apply their skills to solve new and complicated problems. Standards in writing are a relative weakness in all years, including Reception. Pupils attain average standards of sentence construction, punctuation and vocabulary in literacy lessons. However they do not have enough opportunities to practise and develop these qualities, or to write in different styles, in their other lessons. As a result the content of their written work is underdeveloped.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect maturely on such issues such as beauty and belief. They have a well developed moral code that underpins their outstanding behaviour both in and out of lessons. Pupils relate very well towards one another and to their teachers. They are positive, extremely polite and very proud of their school. However their understanding of a multicultural society is underdeveloped. Pupils enjoy school and were keen to share with inspectors the results of their own pre-inspection survey that shows how much they like school and how they thought it had recently improved. Pupils feel safe and report that the school is free from bullying. They are confident in approaching a member of the school's staff if they have a worry and say their concerns are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils are proud of the work of the School Council, and describe excitedly how they have organised a friendship bench and improved the toilets. Being 'friendship buddies', raising money for charity and helping in village celebrations provide further good experience in taking responsibility and contributing to the community, pupils' active involvement in such work, and their satisfactory development of basic skills, equips them well for later life. Pupils understand clearly the need to eat healthily and take exercise. They do their best to put this into practice in their choice of lunches, and in their enthusiastic participation in physical education lessons and games. Attendance levels are satisfactory and have risen recently. This is because of rigorous procedures for improvement, such as the wide use of rewards and work with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. As a result of the teaching they receive, pupils make satisfactory progress. Relationships in lessons between pupils and staff are very good, which leads to pupils having good attitudes to their work. Teaching assistants understand the needs of pupils well and provide effective support to pupils with learning difficulties so that they can take a full part in lessons and make similar progress to other pupils. In the most effective lessons, work is interesting and exciting. Good use is made of pupils' individual learning styles and linking subjects to make learning relevant. For example, facts learned about Africa in geography are used in art lessons to make masks. In these lessons the objectives and expectations are shared with pupils and progress towards them is regularly reviewed so that pupils can explain what has been learnt. In the good mathematics lessons in Years 4 to 6 teachers have high levels of, subject knowledge, used skilfully to challenge and extend pupils knowledge and understanding. In a small minority of less effective lessons the purpose of the work is not made clear enough and activities do not sufficiently engage the pupils. As a result their progress is slowed. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly. However there is a lack of consistency in teachers' use of test and other results to plan appropriate and challenging work that will stretch pupils' capabilities and accelerate their learning. Pupils' books are regularly marked but teachers' comments do not always say how work can be made better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum builds effectively on pupils' prior attainment and experience. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. For example, the successful art master-classes are part of the recently developed programme for gifted and talented pupils. Mathematics planning is a strong feature of the curriculum as it provides many challenging opportunities for pupils to solve advanced mathematical problems. The planning of work to develop pupils' writing is a weakness. Too few opportunities are provided to develop writing skills across the curriculum and planning does not take sufficient account of the standards pupils should achieve. The personal, social and health education programme is good and supports pupils' good personal development. The curriculum is enriched by French lessons, a good range of trips and visits to places of interest and sports and other clubs that are well supported by pupils. These opportunities greatly extend and develop pupils' interests and aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. Care and support are good. Sensitive support and care is provided for pupils with learning difficulties or medical

problems. This enables all pupils to participate fully in lessons and make satisfactory progress. The school cares for any vulnerable children well by making good use of external agencies and specialists to promote their welfare when the need arises. Child protection procedures are secure and health and safety arrangements are robust. Assessment and tracking procedures are satisfactory and improving. The quality of target setting and tracking of progress has been too variable and has led to the differences in standards in writing and mathematics. Under the new headteacher, effective action has been taken to ensure pupils are set challenging targets in all their subjects and to closely monitor their progress towards achieving them. If a pupil's progress slows, appropriate remedial work is provided. Pupils know their targets well and get regular feedback from their teachers on their progress towards them through regular marking and verbal reports. However pupils are not always provided with sufficient detail to show them how they can achieve more.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has astutely used monitoring and evaluation quickly to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result measures are already in place to improve standards and achievement, teaching and learning, the curriculum, academic guidance and leadership and management. A well planned programme of professional development for staff supports these actions. While it is too early to measure their impact on academic standards, there are many signs of improvements elsewhere and the school clearly has the capacity to develop further. Parents feel that steps taken to improve communication between school and home are successful. Pupils think their learning environment has much improved because of the headteacher's willingness to listen and act on their views. Improvements have been made in the setting of challenging targets and tracking pupils' progress. Classes for gifted and talented pupils have been started. The headteacher's drive to improve standards is effectively supported by the staff. Governance is good. Governors have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their monitoring visits and their detailed understanding of data. They effectively challenge the school on its performance. They are committed to improvement and demonstrated this by postponing the appointment of a new headteacher until they found a candidate who shared their vision and enthusiasm.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 June 2006 Dear Pupils Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly. You clearly value being in a small school where everyone knows each other and you all get on so well. We enjoyed our conversations with you about your work and the other things that you do at school. We have judged that the school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is improving. Here are some of the highlights:

You enjoy your learning and work hard for your teachers.

You are very polite and extremely well behaved.

All of the staff care for you very well.

You do very well in mathematics.

You have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise.

You enjoy the good number of extra activities such as visits and clubs which the school provides.

Your new headteacher is improving the school. What we have asked your school to do now:

To help you make better progress in writing.

To use your test results to plan work which is just right for you.

To really stretch you by making sure that teachers show you how you can make your work even better. Best wishes for your future and the future of the school. Yours sincerely Gerald Griffin Lead Inspector