



Western Springs Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124125
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292894
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Road
School category	Community		Rugeley
Age range of pupils	3–11		WS15 2PD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01889 256000
Number on roll (school)	199	Fax number	01889 256008
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Kevin Walsh
		Headteacher	Shirley Wellings
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	1–2 November 2006	292894

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a relatively disadvantaged area on the outskirts of Rugeley. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school has had several changes of headteacher since the last inspection. A new acting headteacher took up post 19 days prior to the inspection to cover for the current headteacher's long-term absence. Other key staff have also been absent for long periods.

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. Several changes of headteacher, together with the long absence of key staff, have led to falling standards. There are no effective systems for checking on the school's performance, so managers have had little idea of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Governors and other managers have failed to take decisive action to halt the school's slow decline. They are unable to point to a convincing track record of improvement that would suggest that the capacity to improve is anything other than inadequate. Staff morale has fallen as a result of inadequate leadership and management. Teaching has suffered. Lessons are rarely pitched at the right level for the great majority of pupils and too much work is repeated. The result of the inadequate teaching and curriculum is that pupils' achievement is inadequate and they leave with exceptionally low standards. This is despite making a good start in the Foundation Stage, where they are taught well. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep themselves healthy. Teachers are hard working and willing. They have good relationships with pupils and care about their personal development. However, the school's managers have not kept up to date with current regulations and guidance on safeguarding children, so are not providing an adequate standard of care. The acting headteacher has already gained a clear picture of the task facing the school. Her management style has improved staff morale in a very short time. Nevertheless, she has not been at the school long enough to have had an impact on standards and the quality of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are implemented rigorously.
- Ensure teachers set suitably challenging tasks for pupils and increase the progress made in lessons.
- Carry out rigorous monitoring of the school's performance to identify exactly where weaknesses lie. Draw up and implement plans to rectify the weaknesses.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children start Nursery with standards below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception they have made good progress in all areas, so they start Year 1 with average standards. In other years, their achievement is inadequate. By the end of Year 2 standards are very low. Girls' standards are worse than boys', because their progress is much slower. This poor rate of progress continues through Years 3 to 6, so pupils

leave the school with exceptionally low standards and ill equipped in the basic skills required for their future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of pupils are courteous, respectful and enjoy their education. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved this term. Behaviour is satisfactory, because the school has taken rigorous action to address challenging behaviour. There have been no exclusions this term, a significantly better situation than last year. Most pupils behave well in lessons, but their concentration wanders when work is too easy for them. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils understand what is right and wrong and they work well together when asked to do so. They have a satisfactory understanding of what it means to be part of a community, but are not confident in taking responsibility, because they do not get enough opportunities to do so. Pupils have good appreciation of the need to be healthy and safe and make healthy choices when choosing meals at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

In the Foundation Stage children make good progress because activities are planned to build upon what they already know. In other years pupils are not making enough progress because the teaching is not meeting their needs. Too many lessons are pitched at the least able pupils, with no more difficult work for others. 'We would like harder things to do' was a request from one pupil. More able pupils are pleased at first, because they can answer all the questions. After a while, though, they become bored and their attention starts to wander. Boys tend to be asked more questions than girls, in order to maintain their interest. Girls, on the other hand, sit quietly and play little part in the lesson, so they make less progress than boys. Teachers' lack of recent training shows when they have difficulty working new technology, or are unsure about the topic they are teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is well matched to the range of children's capabilities. This is not the case in most other years where the curriculum is inadequate because pupils spend too long going over work they have covered in the past. The curriculum for girls is not matched adequately to their needs, resulting in serious underachievement for them. In too many classes, tasks are mundane and do not extend pupils' learning. The school offers a good range of after school activities, mainly for older pupils, including a residential visit to Shugborough, which are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Pupils say that they feel safe and are well supported through trusting relationships with adults. 'My teacher makes me feel happy when I am sad' explained one girl. However, there are serious weaknesses in the implementation of procedures to ensure the safety of pupils, because the required checks on staff have not been carried out in many cases and it is not clear who staff should turn to if they have concerns related to child protection. Guidance and support to help pupils improve their work are given, but weaknesses in assessing and analysing their progress limit the effectiveness of what is provided. Teachers are not clear about the capabilities of their pupils, so are unable to set appropriate targets or provide effective guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. The recently established nurture group is proving effective in helping pupils to modify their behaviour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

At the time of the last inspection pupils were achieving well. Since then a succession of headteachers has led to a lack of continuity in leadership, which has resulted in falling standards and low morale among staff. Governors have not fulfilled some of their responsibilities, such as those for child protection and ensuring that the school's decline was halted. Teachers have become isolated in their classrooms, so have not had the training necessary to keep their skills up to date. Middle managers have been by-passed and have played little or no role in the school's development, other than in the Foundation Stage which is well led and managed. The school does not have the systems for checking the quality of what it provides. No teaching has been observed for well over a year, for example. Until recently, nobody had a clear idea of the school's weaknesses. Plans to improve the school's performance had inappropriate priorities and, in most cases, were not followed through. Many policies are out of date, although the behaviour policy, drawn up this term, is already proving effective. There have been signs of improvement under the acting headteacher, who has improved staff morale in a remarkably short time. The acting headteacher and her deputy have a very clear understanding of the task facing the school. A list of priorities has been drawn up, but there has not been enough time for actions to have had a significant impact on standards.

Inspection judgements

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

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	2
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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	4
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?	No
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 very much for talking to us when we visited your school. You gave us a lot of help, which made our job much easier. You told us how much you like your teachers, and we agree that you get on well with them. We were very impressed that you know how to keep safe and be healthy. Unfortunately, we found that you are not learning enough about other things. You told us that you would like the work to be harder, and we agree. Lots of the work is too easy for you, so we have asked teachers to make sure that you are given work that is just hard enough to really make you think. The school has had lots of different headteachers in the past few years who have not always been well enough to come to school. This means that the school has not been improving as quickly as it should have and some things that should have been done have not been done. In particular, we have asked the people who run the school to make sure that it is as safe as possible. Your new acting headteacher is starting to improve the school again, but she has not been there long enough to really make a big difference. You can help, by making sure you come to school as often as possible and working hard at all times. Best wishes for your future.