



St Paul's C of E (C) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124227
Local Authority Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 292926
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Walsh

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Byatts Grove
School category	Community		Longton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Stoke-on-Trent ST3 2RH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 235051
Number on roll (school)	194	Fax number	01782 235051
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	K Edwards
		Headteacher	S Hearson
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average primary school that recently changed its name from Edensor C of E Primary School. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average. The school provides extra activities through its extended school status and has a Nursery class. The headteacher joined the school in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory but rapidly improving school. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher has driven many important improvements and halted a decline in standards. As one parent said, 'The school has changed a lot for the better.' Parents are very pleased with the school and recognise that it provides a 'caring and nurturing environment'. Significant improvements have been made to the school grounds and the classrooms. Pupils really enjoy school. This is because of the good curriculum and interesting lessons. School is a place where children feel safe and secure and they blossom, and, as a result, their personal development and well-being are good. One parent said that their child 'loves school and thinks that the staff who care for him are great'. Pupils take immense pride in their school. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community and relish opportunities to be helpful. Their behaviour is exemplary.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average. Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes because of a stimulating curriculum and teaching that challenges them to do well. By the time they enter Year 1, they have made good progress, although standards are generally below average. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were low and pupils made inadequate progress through Years 1 and 2. Recent improvements to teaching and improving pupils' vocabulary have resulted in a rise in standards and satisfactory achievement in Years 1 and 2. In 2006, pupils achieved satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6 and reached below average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Progress in class is improving; it is often good in Years 5 and 6 but slows in Years 3 and 4 because pupils' needs are not as effectively planned for.

Teaching is satisfactory but it is getting better because teachers are taking external advice on board. Their expectations are rising and this is leading to faster rates of progress. Pupils who find work difficult, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress when they are taught in the recently formed 'focus groups' because activities are carefully planned to meet their needs. Their progress is slower when they are taught as part of the whole class because they are sometimes set work that is too difficult.

The activities associated with the extended school have a very positive impact on pupils' personal development, including their enjoyment of the school, and enhance the good care, guidance and support provided by the school. The very careful checking of pupils' progress that has recently been introduced now ensures that extra support is carefully targeted and this, together with thorough data analysis, is helping to improve pupils' achievement. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher makes very rigorous checks on the school's performance. Other staff with management roles are starting to contribute more effectively to monitoring and evaluation, particularly of teaching, but their knowledge of standards and achievement is not as secure. The school has an excellent partnership with others, including parents, the community, other local schools and the local authority, who are providing extra support.

These links are making an important contribution to raising standards and improving achievement and pupils' personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Years 3 and 4, by planning more carefully for pupils' needs.
- Ensure that work always meets the needs of all pupils, particularly those who find work difficult and pupils with learning difficulties when they are being taught as part of the whole class.
- Develop the skills of middle managers so that they have a better depth of understanding of how pupils are performing in relation to national standards and expected levels of achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children come into the Foundation Stage with standards that are well below average. The strong focus on improving children's social skills and poor language and communication ensures that they make particularly good progress in these areas. The recent continuation of this work into Years 1 and 2, together with improvements to the quality of teaching, has led to better achievement. The school's focus on developing writing is helping to improve achievement in English throughout the school. Pupils continue to make better progress in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4 because the work they are set is more challenging. Lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties make good progress when taught in the 'focus groups' because their needs are well met. However, their progress in class is sometimes slower.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and their social development is outstanding. This is a significant achievement of the headteacher, school leaders and the staff team. Although many pupils start school lacking in confidence, they quickly develop into poised and articulate young people. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play and a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are learning to respect the beliefs and cultures of others and more about their own identities. Behaviour is excellent, both in and out of the classroom. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They readily adopt the school's principle of 'think before you act'. Pupils say there is very little bullying and the school 'sorts it quickly'. Behaviour in assemblies is exceptional and pupils are respectful during prayer and joyous when singing songs of praise. Pupils really enjoy school and say that teachers 'make lessons fun'. They apply themselves well to their work and are very enthusiastic about learning. When teachers ask questions, hands shoot up and everyone wants to contribute. Attendance is satisfactory. A small number of pupils take too much time off school and this slows their progress. Hard work by the school has brought about some improvements in attendance and

punctuality. Pupils are very aware of health issues, such as the need for a balanced diet and exercise, and they know how to keep safe. Preparation for life after school is good, basic skills, including use of information and communication technology (ICT), are improving and pupils' mature attitudes and outstanding behaviour will help them to do well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly and is leading to better achievement. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6, and teachers' expectations of pupils are rising. The consistent focus, throughout the school, on speaking and listening and improving pupils' vocabulary is helping to accelerate progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, giving pupils the confidence to ask and answer questions. Lower ability pupils and those with learning difficulties are usually well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. Teaching in the 'focus groups' of lower ability pupils and pupils with learning difficulties is good. Methods are used that motivate the many boys in the groups and ensure that they are actively involved in learning. However, when these pupils are taught as part of the whole class they are sometimes set the same work as the most able pupils and the average pupils, particularly in mathematics. They find this work difficult and often get it wrong. Occasionally, when teachers are working with a group, they do not give enough attention to checking the progress of the other groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved and is now carefully tailored to meet the pupils' wide range of abilities but teachers do not always deliver what is planned. For example, sometimes, pupils with widely differing needs are set exactly the same text book work in mathematics. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good; there is a good balance between interesting adult-led and independent activities. Throughout the school, the focus on developing basic skills, including ICT, has improved and is now good, but improvements are too recent to have had an impact on test scores. Years 3 and 4 pupils have been taught separately for the last few weeks but it is too early to judge the extent to which this is improving these pupils' achievement. Pupils' personal development is addressed well. Gifted and talented pupils enjoy attending the special events where they can access challenging activities. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visitors enriches the curriculum. This extends pupils' experience of the outside world and is developing their knowledge and understanding and their social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know the children exceptionally well. Good personal care contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and their personal development. Pupils and parents find staff very helpful and supportive when they have problems. Procedures to guarantee the pupils' welfare are well implemented. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are quickly identified and very effectively supported. This is helped by exceptionally good links with external agencies. The weekly 'Nurture Group' has been a huge help to those pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. The new systems for checking pupils' progress are very precise. This ensures that underachieving pupils are quickly spotted and given appropriate support. Pupils are aware of their targets and of how to make simple improvements to their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have turned the school around. The decline in standards has been reversed and achievement is improving as a result of extremely rigorous systems of monitoring and evaluation implemented by the headteacher. Other staff with management roles are very hard working and committed to improvement. They are starting to develop their management skills and have undertaken some good quality monitoring of teaching. However, their understanding of how pupils are performing in relation to national standards and expected levels of achievement is less secure. The governors provide the school with good support and appropriate challenge. The school has an accurate picture of what it is doing well and of those areas where further improvement is needed. The good recent improvements in teaching and pupils' personal development and achievement, not to mention the fabric of the building, all demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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.

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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

What a delight and a privilege it was to visit your school recently! Thank you for your help during the inspection. Your school was found to be satisfactory overall but we know that there are many good things about it, including the way the school works with other people to make sure you have lots of exciting opportunities and are well supported when there are problems. You are right to be proud of your school and we know that you will help your teachers to make your school even better. You have such good manners and made us feel very welcome. We enjoyed talking to many pupils around school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour. We were glad to hear that you enjoy school so much, including the after-school clubs and interesting visits. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe and secure and you told us that your teachers look after you very well.

Teaching is satisfactory and getting better. We know that you work very hard in your lessons. Standards are getting higher and you are making satisfactory progress. We have asked your teachers to make sure you do equally well in Years 3 and 4 as in Years 5 and 6. You and your parents told us that the 'focus groups' really help you to make progress and we agree. We noticed that some of you sometimes found the work in class a bit hard, especially in mathematics, and we have asked teachers to set work that helps you to make better progress.

The headteacher is doing an excellent job in running the school. We have asked some of the other teachers to develop their management skills so they can help the headteacher even more.

I have taken away lots of good memories of your school.

Best wishes for the future.