



Barlaston CofE (C) First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124233
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292928
Inspection date 13 November 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell

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

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|---|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of school | First | School address | Broughton Crescent |
| School category | Voluntary controlled | | Barlaston |
| Age range of pupils | 4-9 | | Stoke-on-Trent ST12 9DB |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01782 372543 |
| Number on roll (school) | 85 | Fax number | 01782 372543 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Andrew Lakin |
| | | Headteacher | H Sharp |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 March 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Numbers fluctuate from year to year in this smaller than average school, as does the children's attainment on entry which, overall, is broadly average. Socio-economic indicators are also broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. There is a significantly higher proportion of boys than girls in the school. Most pupils are taught in classes with mixed age groups. There are currently no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average in Year 2 and Year 4, and writing is the weakest element of the pupils' work. The school is tackling this issue well but pupils' progress is limited by weaknesses in the way teachers use assessment information to plan pupils' work and set targets for them. The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that pupils in mixed-age classes cover the knowledge and skills expected for their ages. However, the activities arising from it are not always well enough matched to the pupils' different stages of learning. Overall, the curriculum and the quality of teaching are satisfactory. Children make sound progress in Reception because of the satisfactory provision there and by the time they start Year 1, standards are as expected nationally.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This is because the overall care, guidance and support provided for them are good. Pupils behave well, enjoy school and are keen to learn. The good quality personal support and counselling provided by the school, for example through the lunchtime nurture group, help pupils to mix well with others and demonstrate the school's caring ethos. Most pupils are enthusiastic about the targets they have recently been given but many are unsure about what they need to do to reach them. Teachers' marking does not help them in this respect. The school's good links with parents, other schools and external agencies contribute well to pupils' personal development.

Governors and senior managers carry out their roles and responsibilities satisfactorily. Having been released from her teaching commitment, the headteacher has led the way on strategic planning and this is now good. Much work is still at the planning stage but some improvement is already evident. For example, there is now a common approach to tracking pupils' progress, and the good links made between different subjects ensure that the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well promoted. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's evaluation of itself is accurate and well founded. This, the improvement in the issues from the last inspection, and the more recent work to improve teaching and learning all demonstrate the school's sound capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way teachers use assessment information when planning pupils' work and setting targets for them, so that both are more accurately related to pupils' different learning needs.
- Improve pupils' understanding of how to reach their targets, and improve teachers' marking so that it shows them how to do this.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are as expected nationally at the end of Reception, reflecting the children's satisfactory progress in their first year in school. Standards are average in Year 2 and, measured by the results of the optional national tests, they are as expected nationally in Year 4. Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, is satisfactory.

Pupils do best in reading. The recent focus on extending their vocabulary by improving their speaking and listening skills is improving writing. This, and the good links made between subjects, has resulted in pupils using their writing skills well in different contexts. The standards seen in some of the written work in Year 4 were higher than the test results would suggest. Pupils use their number and data handling skills well in different contexts but they still find difficulty in solving problems in mathematics.

The school sets itself realistic targets and has begun to translate these into targets for individual pupils. However, pupils' targets are based on what is expected for their ages rather than on extending what they already know. This limits their effectiveness in raising achievement and affects the progress of all pupils, from the least to the most able. Activities in writing are not always sufficiently challenging for all pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and valued, secure in the knowledge that staff will always help them if they have a problem. The good relationships between adults and pupils underpin the school's success in this aspect of its work. Attendance is only satisfactory because some parents still take their children on holiday during term time.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils respond positively when given responsibility, for example as school councillors. They have a good understanding of the principles of healthy living. This is fostered well through, for example, encouraging them to grow vegetables in the school garden and using them to make pizzas, and through the wide range of well-attended sporting activities. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community, participating regularly in village events, and raising money for various charities at home and abroad. Through all of this, and through their sound progress in basic skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared to help them secure future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching is enabling pupils to make sound progress. However, some good teaching was observed during the inspection. Lessons are orderly and classroom

management is good. All teachers explain clearly to pupils what they are expected to learn in lessons. Regular references to this ensure that pupils concentrate well and sometimes make good progress.

One lesson was observed where the teacher built well on what pupils already knew and learning activities matched their different learning needs well. However, this good practice is not evident throughout the school. Most teachers use a suitable mix of whole-class, group and individual teaching, and give pupils time to order their thoughts by discussing their responses with a partner. This is improving pupils' speaking and listening skills, one of the school's key priorities. However, despite their good knowledge of their pupils, teachers do not use assessment information well enough in planning or to set targets for pupils. Also, pupils' targets are not wholly supported by the activities they are given to do in lessons and this means that pupils sometimes do not progress as rapidly as they could. The school has recently started to tackle these weaknesses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, good links are made between subjects, and literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are promoted well in all of them. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education and the curriculum is effectively enriched by a good range of educational visits, visitors and clubs. The school ensures all pupils have access to clubs, providing some at lunchtime to cater for those pupils who catch the school bus at the end of the day. The curriculum successfully ensures that children in Reception and all pupils in mixed-age classes cover everything that is required for their age. However, curriculum planning does not always ensure that pupils have sufficiently challenging activities to accelerate their progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are robust. The school is especially vigilant in helping pupils deal with personal issues, and it nurtures pupils' personal development well. Effective arrangements ensure that children settle quickly in Reception, and pupils transfer confidently to their next school. Good links with other schools and outside agencies provide additional support for the least able pupils. The school's support for pupils' academic development is satisfactory. Pupils have recently been given targets to improve their learning. However, many remain unsure about what they need to do to reach them. Although teachers discuss pupils' work with them, their written marking rarely gives pupils reminders about how to do this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governors and senior managers regularly review the school's performance. The governors' decision to release the headteacher from a teaching commitment has underpinned the recent improvement seen in the school. There is a clear and common sense of purpose and direction amongst staff, governors and parents.

Through the checks made on teaching and learning, senior staff have accurately identified the key areas in which improvement is needed. For example, the need to make more use of assessment and performance data to guide improvements in pupils' learning is given a high priority. Much has been done to kick-start the process, and attendance at courses and visits to other schools have successfully raised teachers' awareness in these areas. However, pupils' targets are still mostly based on the expectations for their age rather on what teachers know from assessing their learning. As a result, the initiative is not yet improving pupils' progress as rapidly as it might. The headteacher now has a more visible role in monitoring and evaluation. This is helping to achieve some consistency in the way in which management decisions are translated into action throughout the school.

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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 | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 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 | 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? | 3 |
| 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

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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. We enjoyed talking to you, visiting your classrooms and finding out how much you enjoy learning. We also read carefully what your parents had to say and this was very helpful to us. We found that your school gives you a satisfactory education and that some aspects of its work are good. Here are the other things we found:

- satisfactory teaching helps you to make sound progress and reach the standards expected for your age in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave the school
- we agree with you and your parents that you are well cared for and supported by your teachers. The school is safe and orderly, allowing you to enjoy learning and develop good personal skills
- your school is led and managed satisfactorily. You are given the right things to learn in all subjects and a good range of clubs and activities is provided for you.

These are the things we have asked your school to do even better:

- make better use of all the information your teachers have about how well you are doing, to plan your work and set your targets, so that all of you make faster progress
- help you all to understand the targets you have been given and why, and mark your work better so that you know what you need to do to reach your targets.

We hope that you continue to enjoy learning in the future, and wish you all well.