



The Faber Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131984
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 293908
Inspection date 4 December 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cotton Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Cotton
Age range of pupils	4-11		Stoke-on-Trent ST10 3DN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01538 702324
Number on roll (school)	60	Fax number	01538 703715
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dorothy Lowe
		Headteacher	Francesca Devine
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small rural primary school takes some pupils from the local village but most from surrounding areas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is above average. Children's attainment when they start school in the Reception class varies from year to year. It is at least broadly average in most years and in the current year is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides well for its pupils both socially and academically. Members of staff give pupils good personal and academic support and, from an early age, teach them good values. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils quickly learn to respect each other and adults. They are sociable, confident and articulate and become eager learners. Projects such as 'The Garden Growers' business and the preparation of presentations for governors encourage pupils to take responsibility and prepare them successfully for the next stage of their education. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by taking part in local events and raising funds for charities. Standards improve as pupils move through the school and are well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and there is a rich and interesting curriculum that makes learning fun. Provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) has improved in the last year and is now good. Children in the Reception class are benefiting from being taught separately for the first time in a new classroom. Good teaching helps these children to make good progress from their starting points and most are on target to meet or exceed the expected levels for their age. The school has rightly identified that more needs to be done to improve the rigour of assessment in the Foundation Stage. At the moment, this does not give a clear enough picture of overall attainment by the end of the Reception Year, making it difficult to track progress accurately. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Pupils do especially well in reading because of the many good opportunities that they get to read in school and to their parents at home. Teachers are generally very successful at meeting pupils' differing needs, although there are some missed opportunities to extend the learning of more able pupils. This is most noticeable in science where pupils sometimes do the same work whatever their ability. This slows the pace of learning.

The school is well led and managed. This is a key factor in its success. The headteacher and governors are passionate about 'their school' and over the last few years, their determined leadership has ensured that there have been many worthwhile developments. The good systems that are in place to check whether pupils are doing well enough mean that the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and a good capacity to improve further. The headteacher has established outstanding links with parents. They are rightly proud of the school and make a strong contribution to their children's learning. One parent summed up their views; 'The school has a very warm and homely feeling when you walk in and the pupils are all very helpful and polite which gives me great peace of mind'.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality and rigour of assessment in the Foundation Stage
- ensure that there is always enough challenge for more able pupils, especially in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Standards in the Reception Year are rising, due to improved provision in the current year and are now above those found nationally. Children in the Reception class listen especially well and quickly develop good social skills. This continues throughout most of the school.

Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils make outstanding progress in reading throughout the school and develop a wide range of skills. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and writing, with especially fast progress being made in Years 5 and 6, due to the consistently high expectations of the teacher. In science, there is sometimes a lack of challenge for more able pupils and this slows the speed at which skills can improve. The good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is a direct result of the effective support that they are given in lessons from teachers and skilled teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

In all classes, good attendance and smiling faces demonstrate the pupils' great enjoyment of school. This is an important reason why they do so well. Children settle into school quickly in the Reception class, understand routines well and are good at remembering to conserve energy by turning off the lights. Most pupils behave well and are attentive, although there are occasions when some pupils in Years 3 and 4 call out and do not listen to teachers or each other well enough. At these times, the pace of learning slows. At playtime, pupils of various ages play together amicably and enjoy the interesting games provided. They are especially pleased with the new covered play area.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good links with the church ensure that spiritual development is especially strong. Pupils show consideration and thoughtfulness when suggesting people to include in their prayers. Pupils understand the importance of healthy and safe living and enjoy the toast and milk made available at playtime. As one pupil said, 'toast is better for you than sweets and crisps'. Pupils feel safe at school and one pupil expressed the views of others by saying 'the teachers look after you well'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn quickly in most lessons because teachers have good relationships with them and plan purposeful and interesting tasks. For example, in an outstanding lesson

in Years 5 and 6, pupils produced high quality written work about 'a visit to a planet' because the teacher used music and discussion so imaginatively to promote an excited response. In the Reception class, children are given clear instructions for tasks. Interesting activities engage their interest well, enabling them to learn to concentrate and listen carefully. Throughout the school, information and communication technology is used well to reinforce learning. This was seen to good effect in Years 1 and 2, where work on symmetry was rounded up well with a challenging shape-sorting activity on an interactive whiteboard. Teachers generally ask challenging questions when working with the whole class or small groups of pupils. However, there are some occasions when opportunities are missed to extend the learning of more able pupils fully. This is most noticeable in pupils' written work in science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides stimulating and purposeful activities, including the opportunity for pupils to learn to speak French and German. Basic skills are promoted successfully throughout the school. Numeracy and reading skills are used well to support learning in other subjects but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing across the curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, children are given a wide range of interesting activities, although the lack of easy access to an outdoor area sometimes limits their choices. The school does all it can to overcome this by timetabling regular sessions outside.

There is a good range of clubs, visits and visitors, including a residential visit for older pupils. These have a good effect on learning by giving pupils opportunities to work together and to learn new skills. Close links with other schools and local industry enables pupils to take part in a wide range of sports and competitions. For example, more able pupils are taking part in a mathematics challenge to calculate fuel consumption of racing cars on a track and the angles through which they turn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'Children and staff have a superb relationship. My daughter frequently runs into school to give teachers a hug.' This written comment from a parent captures the good quality of care given to pupils. The school works very closely with parents to safeguard pupils' well-being. One member of the school council demonstrated the faith pupils show in their teachers by saying, 'if you have a problem, they sort it out for you'. Good academic support contributes well to the good progress made by pupils. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress is tracked thoroughly in English and mathematics, and pupils understand their individual targets well. Any pupils facing difficulties are identified early and effective arrangements are put in place to enable them to make good progress. In the Reception class, assessment arrangements are less well established due to recent changes in provision and are not always accurate enough. The school has identified the need to provide training to develop this aspect further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers are receptive to new ideas. Over the last few years, there have been many good improvements that have had a good effect on learning. For example, teachers have recently used an innovative programme to involve parents in supporting their children at home. This has helped to improve basic skills across the school. Recent improvements to accommodation are also proving very beneficial, especially for the youngest children in the school. The school's recent track record of development and the commitment and drive of the headteacher and governors demonstrate that there is a good capacity for further improvement. There are good systems for monitoring school effectiveness. Consequently, there is a clear understanding of what is working well and what still needs improving. In this small school, responsibilities are sensibly shared between staff. This works most effectively in English and mathematics where subject leadership is thorough. In other subjects, procedures for checking the quality of provision are less well developed, mainly because some members of staff are new to their responsibilities. Consequently, some weaknesses have not been picked up quickly enough, especially in science. Governance is good. Governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and provide a good level of challenge to the school.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school in such a polite and friendly way and for showing us your work. We are pleased that you come to such a good school. We especially like the way that you have grown and sold your own produce.

What your school does best:

- good teaching helps you to learn well, especially in English and mathematics
- your behaviour is good and you enjoy school
- there is a good curriculum and teachers provide you with lots of interesting activities in and out of lessons
- all adults in school are very kind and caring and they give you good support if you are struggling with your work
- the school council takes a good part in school life and makes some very sensible suggestions about how to improve things
- your headteacher and teachers are working hard to make the school even better
- your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- make sure that teachers check more carefully how well children in the Reception Year are doing
- give you work that is always hard enough for you, especially in science.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.