



Summerhill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 135032
Local Authority Sandwell
Inspection number 294259
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Shirley Billington

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Central Avenue
School category	Community		Tipton
Age range of pupils	3–11		DY4 9RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5573282
Number on roll (school)	289	Fax number	0121 5207520
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Peter Cole
		Headteacher	Kerry Rochester
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007	Inspection number 294259
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Summerhill opened in April 2005 following the amalgamation of two primary schools. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed the following September. The school is working in challenging circumstances. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. There are several initiatives in place to support individual pupils who often work with learning mentors and learning support partners. When children join the Nursery their skills are very limited. A few of the children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

The turnover of staff has been very high and over half the teachers are in their first year of teaching. The school is due to move to a new building in 2008 when a children's centre will be established on the same site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

'I am proud to say that my children go to Summerhill.' This comment from one parent sums up the confidence that the vast majority of parents have in the school's work. They are right to be pleased. The school provides a sound education for its pupils. It is improving at a rapid rate and has a good capacity to improve further. This is the result of effective leadership that provides a clear vision and determination that pupils will have the skills and personal qualities to equip them for the future.

That vision is beginning to be realised. When the school opened, it was evident that pupils throughout the school were underachieving. Good strategies have been implemented to help them to make up lost ground. Standards are still very low but are beginning to show signs of improvement, particularly in mathematics. English remains a particularly weak area. Achievement for pupils throughout the school is satisfactory, although there is variation in how well different groups are doing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from well-targeted support and make good progress. The learning of more able pupils is not always challenging enough. They sometimes do the same work as the rest of the class and as a result they do not learn as quickly as they could.

Teaching has been strengthened by new appointments and is satisfactory. Good support for inexperienced teachers is helping them to quickly grasp the skills essential for success. This ensures that lessons are well organised and expectations of behaviour are clear. The curriculum is sound and has been successfully adapted to focus on key skills in literacy and numeracy. However, not enough attention is given to extending pupils' vocabulary and their ability to express ideas. This affects their progress in reading and writing.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start and are well prepared for later learning. There are very good systems for tracking pupils' progress. The information is used well to provide focused support for those pupils who are performing at much lower levels than they should be. Targets are in place so that teachers are clear about the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils themselves though are not always clear about what their targets are, or what they have to do to achieve them. Marking is not always as informative as it should be and rarely indicates how well pupils are doing in relation to their targets.

Pupils' personal development is good. This is an area where there has been significant improvement as a result of strengthening systems for managing behaviour and promoting good attendance. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about school and keen to learn. They are very proud when their achievements are recognised and enjoy getting certificates or earning the 'pupil of the week' cup.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' speaking skills in order to raise standards in English.
- Ensure that more able pupils make the progress that they should.

- Ensure that pupils are clear about their targets and that teachers' marking guides their progress towards achieving them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Recent initiatives have successfully boosted progress, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Achievement throughout the school is now satisfactory. Standards are still exceptionally low at the end of Year 6 but there was improvement in national test results in 2006 and they are set to rise further this year. Improvement is more evident in mathematics and science than in English because literacy skills are still weak for a significant proportion of pupils.

There are secure indications of rapid improvement in achievement for younger pupils. Children in Nursery and Reception are making good progress, particularly in early literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils currently in Year 1 are making rapid gains and standards for this year group are quickly approaching expected levels. For pupils in other year groups, poor progress over a prolonged period has affected achievement. Many are now making up lost ground and extra support and well-planned programmes in Years 5 and 6 are resulting in rapid gains. However, for many pupils throughout the school, speaking skills are limited and this hinders their progress in other areas.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from good provision and are making good progress. However, more able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged and, as a result, very few reach the standards of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils are enthusiastic about school and clearly enjoy the range of activities on offer. Most are keen to learn and listen attentively in lessons although a few struggle to maintain concentration for more than a short period. Behaviour is good. Year 6 pupils are very positive about how much it has improved over the past year, saying, for example, 'there used to be a lot of bullying, now it's sorted out'.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, although there are strong elements in the social and moral aspects. Year 6 pupils enjoy working as a team, as they do for example during the activities week and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Although they learn a little about world religions, their understanding of life in a culturally diverse society is limited.

Pupils have good awareness of the importance of eating healthily, taking regular exercise and keeping safe. They make a good contribution to the school by taking on responsibilities and making decisions through the school council. There are good links with the local community. Pupils are particularly proud of their work to improve the environment through, for instance, recycling waste and participating in the Tipton 'litter watch' campaign.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are good features to teaching and elements of effective practice that are boosting pupils' progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Good teaching in Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children are making good progress in the early stages of learning. Good support is provided for inexperienced teachers and their skills are being enhanced as a result.

In most lessons, interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate key teaching points. Planning is detailed and account is taken of different levels of ability in a class, but the plans do not always ensure effective practice. As a result, more able pupils are not stretched as much as they should be. The amount of work expected of other pupils is sometimes unrealistic given their limited literacy skills and they are not given enough structured support to help them to succeed. Learning objectives are shared with the class and lessons have a clear focus. Work is regularly marked, but the quality of marking is too variable. There are examples of informative and helpful comments but also comments that are very general and occasionally negative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In Nursery and Reception, good attention is paid to developing children's language through practical activities and role play. In other year groups, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' speaking skills, for example by focusing on key vocabulary relevant to the subject.

Good adaptations have been made to the curriculum to accelerate progress in basic skills. Activities such as daily 'reading workshops' are well organised to encourage pupils to think about what they are reading, for example about the meaning behind an author's words. However, the amount of time given to English and mathematics squeezes out other subjects. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is very limited. The school recognises these weaknesses and has begun to implement strategies to enable literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to be taught through subjects such as history and science.

Good opportunities to visit local places of interest and visitors to school extend pupils' experiences and support their personal development. There is a good range of clubs, particularly sporting activities, and pupils are enthusiastic about these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for and the attention and support given to individuals has proved very successful in improving behaviour and attendance. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have comprehensive plans that track their progress against clear targets.

The support they are given in small groups or individually is effective in ensuring their participation in lessons and good progress. Children learning English as an additional language are well integrated and participate readily in all activities.

Very detailed systems have been put in place to track the progress of pupils throughout the school. Information is regularly analysed to identify which pupils need extra support to help them to make up lost ground. Intensive work in small groups is proving very effective, enabling many of these pupils to make impressive gains in a short period. Targets have been introduced that focus on the next steps in learning. However, like the learning objectives, these are not always worded so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and at times they struggle to recall what their targets are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong and determined leadership underpin the rapid improvement made by the school in a short period. Weaknesses in teaching have been successfully tackled. Rigorous procedures for selecting new staff have ensured a stable teaching team with a shared determination to ensure that pupils achieve well. Strategies implemented to support that vision are beginning to have a positive impact, as is evident in the recent improvement in standards. With a high proportion of inexperienced teachers, a small team of senior staff has a considerable workload. Their priorities are right and they are moving the school forward at an impressive rate, but inevitably some areas lack attention, for example leadership in ICT. Plans are in place to address this as soon as management can be structured to do so.

Rigorous analysis of data and regular monitoring of lessons and pupils' work mean that senior staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Planning to address these areas is good and effective action is taken to eradicate weaknesses. Governors are well informed and fully involved in strategic planning to take the school forward.

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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?	2
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	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	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	3
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

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

You may remember that I recently visited your school with my colleagues to see how you are getting on. Many thanks to all those of you who helped us by telling us so much about your school. We were very impressed by the way you behave and your good manners. We felt that your school is doing a sound job and it is getting better and better every day.

These are some of the things that we thought were particularly good.

- You get lots of help so that those of you who missed out on learning some things early on are now quickly catching up.
- Children in Nursery (you call this early years) and Reception are getting a good start to their learning.
- You understand how important it is to keep fit and healthy. Lots of you told us that school lunches are good and we certainly enjoyed sampling them!
- People in charge of the school are working hard to make sure that you get every opportunity to learn. Many exciting things are happening and you told us that you enjoy lots of visits and activities like Huff and Puff and the breakfast club.

We have suggested that the school needs to do three things now.

- Help you to learn lots of new words and to be confident in the way you explain your ideas – this will help with your reading and writing.
- Make sure that those of you who are quick to learn are given work that really makes you think.
- Make sure that you understand your targets and that when your work is marked you get some idea of how well you are doing and understand what else you need to do to improve.

You can help by really working hard towards those targets!

With very best wishes for your future