



Mesty Croft Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103907
Local Authority Sandwell
Inspection number 294499
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector David Carrington

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Luke's Road
School category	Community		Wednesbury
Age range of pupils	3–11		WS10 0QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5560854
Number on roll (school)	362	Fax number	0121 5053752
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Andrew Kirby
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006	Inspection number 294499
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mesty Croft is bigger than most primary schools. The pupils come from the urban area surrounding the school. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals because there is considerable hardship in the district. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties and disabilities. Nearly all the pupils speak English as their first language. Children start Nursery with low levels of skills and knowledge.

After a lengthy gap without a deputy headteacher, one took up post in September 2006. Three other teachers joined the school recently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement because it has improved sufficiently during the last year and now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. There is a continuing weakness as pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is not consistent. Senior leaders are working effectively to improve the progress made by pupils, although there is work still to do to meet the school's higher aspirations.

Standards are below average and whilst achievement is satisfactory it is still not strong enough particularly amongst the more able pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because their learning is particularly lively, enjoyable and focused firmly on the development of important early skills and knowledge. Achievement has been improved successfully in Years 1 and 2 and is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make the expected progress throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Behaviour is good and the school is a calm place of learning. Pupils enjoy their education and most of them work hard in lessons. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The staff take good care of the pupils and there are robust systems to ensure they are safeguarded well.

Since the last inspection school leaders have worked effectively to eliminate the deficit budget. The headteacher has reorganised the senior leadership team and recent staff appointments have been good. Senior leaders have a firm grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have already made considerable improvement to the systems for checking and evaluating the quality of education and the rate of pupils' progress. Assessment is more reliable than in the past and the tracking of pupils' progress is based on appropriate checks to ensure key skills, knowledge and understanding are being built securely. All these systems are appropriate, although they have not had enough time to impact fully on pupils' achievement.

Staff and governors have a realistic view of the school's performance. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory but the pace of learning and the match of work to the ability of the pupils are not consistent. The more able pupils are sometimes set work that is too easy. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory and the school has the necessary capacity to continue and accelerate its improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace, challenge and match of work to pupils' abilities to ensure their achievement is maximised.
- Make sure that the tracking of targets for achievement is focused squarely at all times on the effective building of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the systems to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of the school's work to bring greater consistency of provision across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although inconsistent in Years 3 to 6. Children make a brisk start to their education in the Foundation Stage and the low starting level of skills and knowledge is quickly improved. The children are enthusiastic learners, they enjoy their work and make rapid progress, which is good overall. By the time they start Year 1 many have met their targets and those who have not are working steadily towards them.

The school has improved pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 effectively. By the end of Year 2 standards are below average but they are rising as a result of more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. There is still a little inconsistency in the pace and challenge of work which slows achievement but, overall, the pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is more markedly inconsistent. The grouping of pupils by ability for English and mathematics is appropriate but the match of work to their ability is not precise enough in all groups. This means the more able pupils often lack challenge. On the other hand, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given work that meets their needs and this enables them to make steady and satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are keen to be at school. They usually maintain good interest levels and most of them work purposefully. Attendance levels are below average but the school works well to reduce absence. Most of the gaps in attendance are from a small number of pupils. Whilst pupils are soundly prepared for life outside school, the development of basic skills is affected by the inadequate rate of progress in Years 3 to 6 and the dependency on teachers that some older pupils show.

Behaviour is particularly good, although there is some fidgety behaviour in a few lessons where the pace is too slow. Pupils are alert to keeping safe and know what to do if they are threatened in any way. The school deals firmly and effectively with any bullying. Pupils know how to keep healthy and have satisfactory opportunities to keep fit through the programme of physical education activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

The school community is something that the pupils are proud of. They look out for each other's needs and give good support to others. Older pupils enjoy working with children in the Foundation Stage during 'Golden Time' on Fridays. The pupils have a good influence on improvements made to school, and are pleased with the refurbishment of their toilets that followed their advice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and has been improved soundly since the last inspection. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage because the work is carefully planned to meet children's different needs and the activities are an effective blend of teacher led investigation and independent enquiry. There is a thirst for learning in Nursery and Reception.

The school has eliminated the key weaknesses in teaching in Years 1 and 2 that were present during the last inspection and it is now satisfactory. In some lessons in these two years the pace is too slow and the work is not demanding enough. These weaknesses are also present in Years 3 to 6. There is also more variation in the quality of teaching and learning in these later years. The level of expectation has been raised, although in some cases pupils are given virtually identical work regardless of ability. The school is working steadily to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 and it is satisfactory overall. There is evidence of some good lessons where learning is brisk and challenging but this is not sufficiently widespread.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some good elements to enrich pupils' experiences, including residential visits. Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their education. They participate in well planned and exciting activities that enable them to make good progress, especially in their personal development.

In Years 1 to 6 the curriculum is satisfactory. The planning of learning is not clearly enough focused on the needs of different ability groups, especially in Years 3 to 6. The curriculum is being modified sensibly to include stronger links between subjects, particularly for the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There are effective support programmes that enable pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities to make satisfactory progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers and other staff are particularly concerned to make sure all pupils are looked after well. They make sure every pupil is safeguarded, and vulnerable pupils and those who find life in school difficult are counselled well. The pupils recognise this and say the staff are good friends. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is effective and most teaching assistants work well with their groups, encouraging pupils to work for greater success.

Procedures for assessment have improved well and are now satisfactory. They are now much more reliable sources of information about the progress of pupils, although the past inaccuracy of assessment still has some influence on the precision of the target setting and tracking process. Improvements to the tracking of progress have been satisfactory, although there is inconsistency in the way that the information is used to guide pupils to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher and the senior management team are determined to raise achievement, especially in Years 3 to 6. The systems to check the school's work give school leaders and the governors an accurate understanding of the school's performance. This monitoring system is insufficiently evaluative in identifying inconsistencies and the necessary action to bring rapid improvement.

The headteacher gives effective leadership based on a clear vision for the school's future. Staff are committed to improvement and are capable of bringing this about. Improvement is beginning to accelerate in a number of important areas. Astute financial management has enabled the governors and headteacher to ensure the school operates within its allotted budget, which has released finance for the effective strengthening of the leadership team.

Senior leaders, especially the deputy headteacher, have established an appropriate additional programme of study for pupils whose level of progress in literacy and numeracy in Years 3 to 6 gives cause for concern. The quality of teaching is improving because there is effective support and guidance to help teachers improve their performance. This has already had a sound impact in Years 1 and 2, although less so in Years 3 to 6 where improvements have not had enough time to work through to better achievement. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is a strength, and provision in Nursery and Reception is rightly used by the local authority as a model for other schools.

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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	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

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?	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	3

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?	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

It was good to join you in school for two days earlier this week. We enjoyed talking with you and sharing some of your learning during our visit. Thank you for the welcome you gave us.

You told us that you particularly like learning about new things and that your teachers and the other adults are friendly and helpful. We found out a lot about your school.

- In the last year your school has improved the education you are given so that it is now satisfactory.
- You make sound progress and standards are rising in school.
- Your behaviour is good, you look after each other well and you enjoy school.
- You are taught soundly.
- The work you do covers all the subjects it should and you enjoy the different activities provided outside lessons.
- Your teachers and other staff help you if you have problems or worries and your new target setting system is starting to help you learn more quickly.
- Your headteacher and other teachers have made some useful improvements to the school that are making your learning more successful.

We think there are three main things that could be improved.

- Some of your work is too easy and you have too long to finish it.
- You are not always given enough ideas about how to improve your work.
- Your headteacher and teacher do not check often enough to see that you are taught well all of the time.

We know you will all want to help your teachers make these improvements. You can start by telling them in lessons about how well you think you are doing.