

Withymoor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103809
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308427
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Hughes
Headteacher	Gillian Harper
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Gayfield Avenue Brierley Hill Brierley Hill DY5 2BH
Telephone number	01384 818530
Fax number	01384 818531

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2008
Inspection number	308427

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Withymoor Primary School is larger than most primary schools. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Overall, children's attainment when they begin school is broadly what is expected for their age. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for two terms. The school has a dedicated language unit on site, providing specialist speech and language support for pupils across Dudley.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Taken overall, the quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The leadership of the new headteacher is secure and acquiring stature and confidence. She has quickly gained the respect and support of staff, parents and pupils. Since her appointment, she has tackled issues with commitment and rigour. It is clear that the school soundly knows itself and it has a sensible set of priorities and a coherent plan for its future improvement. Systems are in place to ensure that priorities are tackled properly, and that the results of any actions taken are appropriately evaluated. These processes have yet to make a full impact on pupils' learning. The school has demonstrated that it has satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

Pupils benefit from sound teaching and a satisfactory curriculum, which enables them to make satisfactory progress to reach average standards in the national tests by the end of Years 2 and 6, with the exception of writing, which is below average. Accordingly, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. One of the reasons why teaching is satisfactory rather than good is that teachers do not always make effective use of assessment information to plan the next small steps in pupils' learning. Another underlying weakness in teaching is that expectations for pupils to complete their written work within a specified time are too low. Most pupils work at a casual pace, often on tasks that are well within their capabilities. Recent changes have been made to the process of setting challenging targets, but there is room for further improvement as they are not demanding enough for the higher-attaining pupils. In recent years, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in the national tests has been lower than the school expected. The higher attainers are capable of doing better in their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. Teachers often accept too readily pupils' first attempts of their work rather than encouraging them to redraft and refine it.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound overall. They form firm relationships with one another and have positive attitudes to all aspects of school life. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and pupils are generally polite to each other and staff. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are valued and respected as individuals. Due regard is paid to encouraging pupils to adopt safe practices and pupils say that they know to whom to turn if they have any worries or troubles, confident that they will be sympathetically treated. Consequently, pupils attend regularly, feel safe and enjoy the opportunities provided for them. Members of the school council really appreciate the part they play in making a positive contribution to school life. They are particularly proud of their initiative to make play times safer and more enjoyable by introducing different play zones.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in Reception settle happily in their classes. Satisfactory leadership ensures that the work is planned well, which ensures that children have appropriate experiences in all six areas of learning. Children start school with the expected level of skills and knowledge and they make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year because the quality of provision meets their needs. Most are working securely towards the early learning goals in the six areas of learning. Sometimes, there are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge, for example, in the teaching of letter sounds (phonics). The school has suitable plans to address this issue. Children's personal and social development is given a high priority by all staff and the children make good progress

in developing these important skills. Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They know how to take turns when sharing resources such as the computer, and they handle books and equipment with care and respect. They show interest and generally concentrate well when working in a group with an adult or when working at a task on their own. The daily opportunities for painting and experimenting with the effects of paint and colour support the children's creative development well. Adults are skilful in extending children's purposeful role play and the well-resourced outdoor area effectively supports children's physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations for how much written work pupils can produce in lessons.
- Improve the level of challenge in the work for higher-attaining pupils, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Use the information gained from assessments more effectively to focus lessons precisely on what pupils need to learn next.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average overall and most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. The school takes positive steps to ensure that pupils in Key Stage 1 build on the secure foundation they receive in the Reception Year. Progress slows in Key Stage 2. Although it remains satisfactory, the pupils are not extended as much as in the earlier years, especially the more able pupils. Additionally, some year groups are slow to line up at the end of playtimes, which results in lessons starting late, which reduces the time available for learning. Generally, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use English or mathematics in other subjects and this prevents them from practising skills gained in these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They undertake a wide range of tasks in an increasingly mature and responsible manner. Pupils understand the importance of exercising regularly and are keen to contribute ideas to improve their school. They have an increasing understanding of enterprise skills through assisting the Parents and Teachers Association in fund-raising activities. Pupils feel safe in school and are proud of their 'Playground Pals' scheme in which older pupils help younger children to resolve any difficulties. Whilst pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, their understanding of other cultures to be found in Britain is not developed as thoroughly as in many primary schools. Some useful work in religious education enhances pupils' understanding of different faiths. As a result, pupils respect the views, values and beliefs of others. However, there is very little work about different cultures in other subjects, which does not fully prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are well structured, and teachers manage pupils well so that positive relationships are developed. Pupils' sound attitudes to work contribute appropriately to the quality of learning. They sustain their concentration and interest for lengthy periods. In the most successful lessons, teachers make extensive use of questioning and discussion to check progress and give pupils the opportunity to hear the ideas of others. Pupils engage with 'talk partners' to compare ideas to enhance their learning. All teachers make appropriate use of information and communication technology to inspire the children in lessons. Consequently, children are content to learn and to do their best. Where lessons are not so successful, there is insufficient provision to offer increased challenge to higher-attaining pupils, which limits the progress they make. Although the school is focused on raising the standards of pupils' writing, ineffective use is made of the considerable time given in the curriculum for pupils to write at length because some teachers spend too long giving information and too little time allowing pupils to discuss and investigate. This reduces the time pupils can spend on sustained writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum complies with all statutory requirements and supports pupils' personal development satisfactorily. However, there is an over-emphasis on literacy, particularly reading, which reduces opportunities for other subjects. All pupils have equal access and opportunity to take part in curricular and extra-curricular activities. A range of opportunities enables pupils to participate in additional activities that enrich the curriculum. A noteworthy example is the successful cooking club. Here, a number of pupils have successfully collaborated with the school cook and entered their healthy menus in a local competition. This serves to enhance pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy eating. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding through educational visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a supportive and caring environment. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements and staff training is up to date. The school has worked hard to improve break times. It has introduced a number of play zones, allowing pupils to choose different activities in a variety of areas around the school. However, some parents remain concerned about the congestion in the dining hall, especially at lunchtimes, and in entrances to the school building. Support and guidance given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The marking of pupils' work does not always provide clear and concise pointers for improvement or sufficient challenge, especially for more-able pupils. Some pupils remain unclear about their targets and especially about how to improve their writing and mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what must be done to improve. It is clear to them, for example, that provision and progress, whilst satisfactory, are improving in the Foundation Stage. Equally, they recognise that opportunities for written work and the challenge given to the higher-attaining pupils are not good enough. Senior managers and leaders of English, mathematics and science observe their colleagues and give feedback on the quality of teaching. They use an appropriate range of systems for measuring and tracking children's progress and attainment. However, in some subjects this is not consistent in its rigour or accuracy. Governance is satisfactory.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

30 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Withymoor Primary School, Dudley, DY5 2BH

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited your school earlier this week. It was good to talk with you and to discover your views about the school. You told us that you felt cared for and safe in school. We agree with you. You know how to keep healthy and fit. It was good to hear how you help to make playtimes safer and more enjoyable. We were pleased that you make friends with one another and have positive attitudes to all aspects of school life. We think your teachers work hard in planning interesting work for you to do and they look after you well. The headteacher and the governors have made many changes to the school to try to make school even better for you. We have made some suggestions that will help them to do this.

- Provide those of you who are more capable with harder work to do.
- Make better use of the information they have from the tests you do to make sure that you are learning as much as you can.
- Expect you to write more in the time you are given in lessons.

We were impressed with the sensible ideas that you suggested for making the school a better place. We hope that your work to improve wet playtimes is successful and that you do well in school. I hope that some of you might want to look at the full report. See if you can find the bit about how the school cook has helped some of you to make healthy meals.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth Her Majesty's Inspector

30 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Withymoore Primary School, Dudley, DY5 2BH

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited your school earlier this week. It was good to talk with you and to discover your views about the school. You told us that you felt cared for and safe in school. We agree with you. You know how to keep healthy and fit. It was good to hear how you help to make playtimes safer and more enjoyable. We were pleased that you make friends with one another and have positive attitudes to all aspects of school life. We think your teachers work hard in planning interesting work for you to do and they look after you well. The headteacher and the governors have made many changes to the school to try to make school even better for you. We have made some suggestions that will help them to do this.

- Provide those of you who are more capable with harder work to do.
- Make better use of the information they have from the tests you do to make sure that you are learning as much as you can.
- Expect you to write more in the time you are given in lessons.

We were impressed with the sensible ideas that you suggested for making the school a better place. We hope that your work to improve wet playtimes is successful and that you do well in school. I hope that some of you might want to look at the full report. See if you can find the bit about how the school cook has helped some of you to make healthy meals.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector