

Queen Victoria Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103826
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308432
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	616
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Everson
Headteacher	Anna Smith
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Bilston Street Sedgley Dudley DY3 1JB
Telephone number	01384 812545
Fax number	01384 812546

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils who either leave or join the school other than at the normal times is high, particularly through Years 3 to 6. Most children start school with levels of skills and knowledge well below those expected. There have been a significant number of staff absences over the last two years.

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. The phrase 'We're special', written on the pupils' sweatshirts, encapsulates the caring and friendly environment in which they learn. The school is popular with parents. Typical remarks include, 'It is a happy school where children are encouraged and valued,' and 'a very safe place to be'. Parents appreciate all that is done for their children and the support that they are given if they request it.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. This good progress continues, and pupils leave school with average standards in English and mathematics in Year 6. Pupils' test results for Year 6 were disappointing in 2007 as a result of previous underachievement and staff absences. The school has worked successfully to address these problems. Strategies such as 'Operation Big Write' have improved pupils' writing, and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in Year 6 in English and mathematics has improved significantly and is above average. There are two main reasons for pupils' good achievement. Firstly, teaching is good and secondly, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching. In the majority of lessons, activities are well organised and teachers have high expectations. Lessons move along quickly and pupils are fully engaged in their learning. A small minority of lessons are less successful, and are only satisfactory, because the pace of the learning is slower and pupils make less progress.

The effective quality care provided by staff has a positive impact on the pupils' good personal development, as does the school's good curriculum. Advice and support from outside agencies are sought quickly, and used well, to support pupils who need help with their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their starting points. Good quality displays show the rich and varied learning experiences pupils enjoy. Academic guidance is good, with pupils receiving effective advice on how to improve their work and reach their challenging and realistic targets. Occasionally, there are times when teachers' marking is less useful and does not contribute much to pupils' achievement.

Pupils' behaviour is good, they know how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep themselves and others safe. The pupils contribute well to the school and wider community. The school council, for example, has been particularly effective in developing the school meals service, and flowers grown at the school decorate and enhance Sedgley High Street. Pupils are kind to each other and welcoming to visitors. However, their understanding of other cultures and beliefs found in modern society is limited. Although pupils enjoy school, attendance is below average despite the school's best efforts to encourage the importance of attending school regularly.

At the heart of the school's success are the good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leadership team. Teamwork is strong, morale high and there is an ambitious vision of continued improvement. Senior leaders ensure that the school is improving well and that important issues that affect pupils' achievement and the quality of provision are addressed effectively. Recent improvements in Foundation Stage provision and writing standards indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. It has improved rapidly over the last year because of the good leadership and management of the Foundation Stage leader. The majority of teaching is good and, as a result, children make good progress particularly in the personal, social and emotional development. However, most children do not reach the expected learning goals by the start of Year 1. The provision has been enhanced by the recent improvements in the accommodation and the excellent resources that are available for the children. Staff do their best to ensure that there is a good balance between activities that they lead and activities that children work at independently or with their classmates. On most occasions, this balance is just right. Staff work closely with parents and, during the inspection, a number of parents were involved in their children's learning by supporting them with their writing. Parents are rightly impressed with the Foundation Stage and this was summarised by one parent who said, 'My child has made remarkable progress in their reading which has been consolidated at home and encouraged by the school.' The children's behaviour is good and they successfully learn to share resources and work cooperatively together. Children's progress is monitored thoroughly and assessments ensure that gaps in children's learning are identified early so that additional support can be provided.

What the school should do to improve further

- Where teaching is less effective, raise teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve and ensure that lessons are conducted at a good pace.
- Ensure that all guidance offered to pupils about improving their work matches the best practice in the school.
- Raise pupils' awareness of the different cultures and beliefs found in modern Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall achievement is good. However, pupils do not do so well in the lessons or classes where teaching is only satisfactory. Focused work on improving pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 means that pupils now finish Year 2 with above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement in Year 2 is often very good because of particularly effective teaching. These rising standards in Year 2 have not yet had time to impact on pupils' average standards in Year 6, although these are steadily improving as a result of better teaching and more stable staffing in Years 3 to 6. Generally, pupils' progress accelerates when they reach Years 5 and 6. Challenging targets are also being used to good effect. The percentage of pupils in the current Year 6 that are achieving the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics is above average because teachers have high expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistently good progress because the school's provision for these pupils is well managed and organised and they are provided with effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and respond well to the many opportunities they are given to take responsibility. The school council has made a difference to the school community, particularly

with their work to promote healthy lunches. Individuals enjoy supporting others, such as the Year 6 pupils helping the younger pupils at lunchtime. Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They point out the benefits of a balanced diet and enjoy the many extra-curricular sporting activities on offer. Pupils are safety conscious and talk confidently about the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but the pupils' cultural development is not as well developed as other aspects. Their awareness of the richness and diversity of British society is limited. The pupils ability to work constructively and sensibly with others such as their 'learning partners' and their good academic progress help them to be well prepared for the next stage of their education and future lives. Pupils' levels of attendance are below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils recognise that they have good teachers who, pupils say, know them well, help them learn and have a good sense of humour. Teachers generally capture the interest of pupils well with their clear explanations. Pupils of all abilities are confident about undertaking their work because they have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the work that is expected of them. Teachers' planning shows that they have a thorough awareness of the needs of individuals and work is planned accordingly. In most instances, the pace of learning is good so pupils make good progress. However, there are areas requiring improvement in the satisfactory teaching, particularly in some Year 3 and 4 classes. Sometimes, the pace of learning is not rapid enough for pupils to make good progress and expectations are not as high as they should be. Equally, teaching does not engage the pupils sufficiently. Pupils are keen to learn and are enthusiastic about their work even when teaching is less effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In general, pupils benefit from a rich and varied curriculum. Initiatives such as 'Building Learning Power' and 'Learning 4 Life' have been successful in contributing to the pupils' good personal development, particularly their positive attitudes to learning. Decision-making skills and independence are also developed well. Provision in information and communication technology has improved significantly since the school was last inspected and school assessment data indicates that pupils are now achieving standards that are above the expected levels for their ages. Many educational visits, visitors and clubs notably enrich the curriculum. These are popular with the pupils. Year 6 pupils, for example, spoke very enthusiastically about their residential weekend where they were able to undertake outdoor adventurous activities. The cultural diversity of modern British society is not promoted sufficiently across the curriculum and this is acknowledged by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. As one parent noted, 'Any problems that do occur concerning my children are dealt with quickly and well.' Pastoral support and guidance are good and pupils know whom they can turn to if they

have a problem. Robust child protection procedures and health and safety checks are regularly carried out. The school works well with external agencies to support pupils when this is required. The support and guidance that pupils receive for their academic development is generally good. Much of the practice found in the school makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning and their good progress. However, there are times when opportunities are missed in teachers' marking to help pupils' improve their work further and move on in their learning. Most pupils know their targets and are able to evaluate their progress and identify what they have to do next to improve. Occasionally, the wording used in targets is too difficult for younger or lower attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'A happy well managed environment' was the accurate description from a parent. It is noticeable that not only are the pupils happy and enthusiastic, so are the staff. This is the result of good leadership and management. The headteacher and senior staff have an accurate view of school performance and, over the last year, have focused their energies on pertinent areas for improvement. For example, the school was aware of unevenness in pupils' progress as a result of less effective teaching in Years 3 and 4. Appropriate strategies have been put in place and are already having benefits although more improvement is needed. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully, so that those who may have slipped behind are quickly identified and supported. Teaching and learning are monitored well and staff receive good feedback on their performance, which is having a beneficial impact along with the high profile given to personal and professional development. Governance is good. Governors are actively involved in self-evaluation, are confident to ask challenging questions and have a good understanding of the school's many strengths but also the areas that require further development.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Queen Victoria Primary School, Dudley DY3 1JB

We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us and being so polite and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed with what you could tell us about your work and targets. Many of you told us that you go to a good school and we agree.

You make good progress during your time in school so that you reach average standards by Year 6. This year, many of you achieved the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics – well done! Teaching is good most of the time and this is why you do well and enjoy learning. Occasionally, not all lessons are as good as they should be so we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to look at this. The school provides you with lots of different interesting activities, including many after-school clubs that help you keep fit. Well done to the school council for their work in improving the school meals!

Your behaviour is good and we were particularly impressed with your enthusiasm for learning and the ways in which you worked with each other. It is quite clear that most of you enjoy school, although there are a few of you who do not come to school often enough. Unfortunately, this means you do not learn as much as you could do. You are well cared for in school and know that there is always a member of staff that you can turn to if you have a problem or concern. Most of the teachers give you good ideas on how to improve your work and get even better particularly through their marking. Sometimes, teachers' marking does not help you enough so we have asked the school to look at this as well. You have a good understanding of right and wrong and of how to keep safe but you do not know enough about the views and beliefs of the different groups of people that live in Britain. The school will look at improving this.

Your school is good because the headteacher, staff and governors manage the school well. They are keen for the school to get even better and you can help them by coming to school regularly and keeping up your enthusiasm for learning.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead Inspector

19 June 2008

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Lead Inspector