

Ulverley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104078
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	308502
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
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	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Quinney
Headteacher	Terri Mason
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Rodney Road Solihull B92 8RZ
Telephone number	01217 423251
Fax number	01217 436938

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ulverley is larger than the average sized primary school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A high number of pupils either leave or join the school during the academic year. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. However, the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational need is above average. The 'Resource Centre' provision caters for pupils with physical disabilities. These pupils are all integrated into mainstream classes.

Staff turnover has been high over the last few years. The school currently has an acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the pupils' achievement, which is currently inadequate.

In a number of respects, the school serves its pupils well. The pupils' good personal development and well-being is a result of the strong pastoral care. Aspects of the school's curriculum, including enrichment activities and personal and social education, contribute well to developing pupils' social skills. The school has a positive ethos and provides a calm and supportive environment. Pupils enjoy being at school. They are well behaved, welcoming and friendly. Parents and carers are pleased with the school. 'My child is happy to come to school every day' and 'They do a great job' are typical comments.

Pupils have not always done as well as they should have. Consequently, a significant number of pupils are not at the levels they should be in English and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. However, the picture is improving and pupils are now making better progress. The school is working hard to ensure that the pupils who have underachieved in the past are moving towards their expected levels. Senior staff acknowledge that there is some way to go but the school is moving in the right direction and pupils' progress is accelerating. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well organised and teachers make activities enjoyable and exciting. There are times when the pace of lessons is not quick enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Equally, the match of work to pupils' needs is not always precise enough to ensure rapid learning. There is some very good marking of pupils' work but this effective practice is not consistent across the school. Targets for pupils in English and mathematics are not making a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Their use varies from class to class; they are not always sufficiently precise or referred to often enough to drive up standards.

The school is moving forward because of the clear direction provided by the acting headteacher. This is recognised and very much appreciated by parents. The strong focus placed on tracking pupils' individual progress and the success of strategies to start improving individual achievement indicate that the school has the capacity to get even better. All staff are becoming more involved in self-evaluation and acting upon identified shortcomings. The role of subject co-ordinators is steadily improving and they are beginning to make valuable contributions to improving school effectiveness. Governors are also contributing well to school development.

The progress children make in their personal and social education is good. Throughout the school, pupils with specific needs, such as those from the 'Resource Base,' are well integrated into the life and work of the school. They make good relationships with their classmates and the adults who work with them. However, there are insufficiently regular reviews of the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities against their individual targets.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join the Nursery class with attainment that is broadly in line with the levels expected for their age. Progress is satisfactory as they move through the Foundation Stage and the

majority achieve the expected learning goals by the end of Reception. Children's achievement is good in personal and social development and this serves them well as they enter Year 1. Children all enjoy school, playing and working productively and often independently. They understand the school's routines and know how to behave well. The good outdoor facilities are used especially well to promote children's physical development. Adults manage and encourage the children well so that they feel secure and begin to develop healthy lifestyles. Good opportunities are provided for children to learn from visits out of school and visitors invited in. There are good links with parents, and teachers actively seek their support and feedback. Parents appreciate and value this approach. Children's learning is regularly assessed but the information collected is not always used to identify priorities for improvement or to ensure that there is progression in the children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that all teaching and learning are good so that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress and underachievement is eradicated.
- Improve the quality and consistency of target setting across the school so the process contributes more effectively to pupils' learning and progress.
- Review more frequently the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities towards their individual targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average and, with the exception of 2006, this has been the case for the last five years. Over the same period of time, standards have been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. As a result of underachievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, many pupils, of all abilities, have not reached the levels expected of them. This is beginning to change for the better with pupils now making at least satisfactory progress. Where teaching is particularly effective, progress is good and pupils who need to 'catch up' are doing so more rapidly.

The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently satisfactory but they have also been affected by underachievement in the past. Pupils who are regularly supported by teaching assistants, such as those from the 'Resource Base,' often do well because of the good quality help that they are given. The achievement of others is inconsistent, because their progress is not monitored regularly enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are polite and helpful and relationships with adults and other pupils are all positive. They give good support to pupils who have physical disabilities and are keen to take on a number of responsibilities around the school. Pupils really enjoy their work; they think 'Lessons are fun'. Their attitudes are good and this supports their learning. Attendance has improved and is now average. Pupils move around the school and play together sensibly and safely.

The school council helps promote pupils' views and has put forward its ideas for improving toilets and made suggestions about behavioural issues. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyle issues and are keen to support people less fortunate than themselves through

raising funds for charities connected with both the local and more extended community. In lessons, pupils work well together, for example, in pairs discussing aspects of their work. With their improving progress in developing basic skills, most pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next phase of education and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classrooms are friendly and welcoming. Pupils enjoy their learning. For example, Year 1 pupils enjoyed using the interactive whiteboard to match words containing 'ea' while pupils in Year 5 carefully studied train timetables as they planned journeys around the Midlands. Assessment information is used effectively to plan work to meet pupils' different needs but this is more successful in some classes than others. Pupils' learning is restricted when work is either not hard enough or too challenging. When lessons move at a good pace, learning is very focused and pupils make good progress. At times, the introduction to lessons is too leisurely. Teachers' marking is satisfactory but inconsistent. High quality marking refers to pupils' targets and successfully guides pupils to the next stages of their learning. However, although it is always supportive, not all marking shows pupils how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of additional activities. These include a wide range of trips, which include several residential visits. Visitors to the school add excitement and extra interest to many curriculum areas, especially in history. Extra-curricular club activities, which range from cooking to music and sport, all add to the development of pupils' social skills and raise their general levels of skill within each activity. The programme to support pupils' personal development is effective, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 benefit from French lessons. Literacy and numeracy skills are not developed effectively across other subjects and this is a development priority for the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Staff know their pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. For example, strategies to improve the progress and self-esteem of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are starting to have a beneficial impact. Child protection procedures and health and safety routines are clear and well known to all staff. Parents are happy in the knowledge that their children are looked after well. The school rigorously checks the backgrounds of adults who work in the school. The school has improved its systems for tracking pupils' progress. However, the data gathered is not yet being used effectively by all staff to set clear and realistic targets for improvement. At present, due to the range and number of targets set for pupils, there is some inconsistency in their application by teachers, and confusion about their purpose in the minds of the pupils. Individual targets for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not always reviewed sufficiently frequently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There have been too many fluctuations in pupils' achievement and standards since the school was last inspected. Although there is some way to go, the school is beginning to turn the corner in eradicating underachievement and improving standards. The indications are positive and the school has a secure basis for further improvement. Parents are rightly complimentary about the role of the acting headteacher in driving the school forward and improving provision. Staff are becoming more involved in school improvement and more accountable for pupils' achievement and progress. There is a clear understanding amongst all staff about the important part that everyone plays in bringing about school improvement. The role of middle managers, such as subject leaders, is developing although they are inexperienced in terms of monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance data to improve achievement. Governors are actively involved in school improvement and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and what is needed to improve.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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	3
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	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	4
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	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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and kind to us when we visited your school to see how well it was doing. You were so welcoming, saying 'Hello' and offering to help with anything. It was good to talk to you about your work and the many other interesting things that happen at the school. I hope all of your Christmas productions went well. This letter is to give you an idea about what is written in the full report that was sent to your parents and carers.

All of the adults take really good care of you. You enjoy lessons and feel happy to come to school. Attendance has improved recently. There are many exciting activities to take part in including a number of residential visits. However, in the last few years, not all of you have learnt as quickly as you should have. Some of you are having to catch up. We have asked the acting headteacher, staff and governors to make sure that you all make good progress by making teaching and learning even better.

Some of you are confused about the targets you have in English and mathematics so we have also asked the school to make sure that you all understand your targets so that they help you with your learning. A number of you are given extra support with your work to help you improve your reading, writing and mathematics. We have asked the school to check your progress more regularly.

Many of your mums, dads and carers are pleased with the way that all staff are working hard to make the school even better. You can help with this by continuing to enjoy your learning, working hard and coming to school regularly.

Best wishes for the future.

29 November 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ulverley School, Solihull, B92 8RZ

Thank you for being so friendly and kind to us when we visited your school to see how well it was doing. You were so welcoming, saying 'Hello' and offering to help with anything. It was good to talk to you about your work and the many other interesting things that happen at the school. I hope all of your Christmas productions went well. This letter is to give you an idea about what is written in the full report that was sent to your parents and carers.

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Best wishes for the future.

Chris Kessell
Lead inspector