

Short Heath Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104188
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	308535
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Callow

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Foster
Headteacher	Diane Lucas
Date of previous school inspection	23 December 2006
School address	Pennine Way Willenhall WV12 4DS
Telephone number	01902 368499
Fax number	01902 606560

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils who attend Short Heath come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but most are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average overall.

The school became part of a federation with Rosedale CE Infant School and Lane Head Nursery School under a shared governing body in April 2006. The executive headteacher for the three schools was appointed in January 2007, just after Short Heath was last inspected. At that time, the school was judged to require significant improvement in relation to pupils' progress and achievement and was issued with a Notice to Improve. A monitoring visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in June 2007 found that the school was making satisfactory progress in improving these areas.

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. As a result of strong leadership by the headteacher and the excellent support of the deputy headteacher and the commitment of governors, Short Heath is a rapidly improving school and its effectiveness is now satisfactory. One parent said, 'My son has enjoyed school more these last twelve months, far more!' Not only can the impact of recent improvements be seen in the much better progress that all pupils are making, but also in their good personal development and well-being. This aspect continues to be a strength of the school and is reflected particularly in pupils' good behaviour and attitudes, as well as the respect and friendliness pupils show to visitors.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with the school's strategies proving effective in enabling pupils to make up lost ground. Teachers and pupils generally have a good understanding of what all pupils 'must' achieve, many 'should' achieve and some 'could' achieve. As a result, the differing needs and abilities of pupils are usually met effectively by work that links well to their next step in learning as pupils move up through the school. This significant factor has enabled most pupils to reach the standards expected for their age and to ensure that achievement is at least satisfactory. An increasing amount of the teaching is good and this is having a positive impact on raising standards, with some pupils making good or better progress in one or more of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, a lack of challenge restricts some pupils from doing even better.

Pupils are cared for very well. Consequently, they enjoy school, they are keen to learn and have positive relationships with adults and with each other. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in particular, get good help from teaching assistants that helps them learn successfully. The academic guidance pupils receive is not quite as good as it could be because the marking of their work does not always tell them how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The progress they make is being increasingly well tracked by leaders so that pupils at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and given appropriate support. The targets pupils are set have recently become much more challenging and there is a strong sense of leaders, staff and governors working together to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve. The capacity for further improvement is good.

The sound curriculum has rightly placed a strong focus on improving pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. Despite this, not enough opportunities are given to pupils to practise and develop their skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in different subjects across the curriculum. The school is aware that its current provision for ICT is not sufficient to ensure that pupils' skills develop well but has good plans to improve this area across the federation of schools. The close collaboration between the schools in the federation is a significant element of Short Heath's effective partnership with a range of organisations that is helping to extend the resources available, improve the quality of education, and enhance pupils' well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring a consistency of good, or better, quality teaching across the school.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to practise and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects across the curriculum.

- Make marking more effective by providing all pupils with clear guidance about how well they are doing in their work and how it can be improved.

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

Attainment on entry into Year 3 varies, but it is above average in most years. The school's own assessments indicate it to be a little lower than test data suggests and particularly in reading. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2007, as in previous years, were below average overall. In English, however, they were much improved and were near the national average. This was due to the strong focus on improving writing in the school and the good intervention strategies that supported the better performance of boys in this subject. Halfway through this year, pupils currently in Year 6 are already reaching standards that are slightly above average. This is the result of better teaching and learning and pupils making good or better progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science over the last year. In other year groups, pupils of all abilities are making satisfactory or better progress in these subjects and so standards have risen since the last inspection. The school has correctly identified mathematics as still requiring more work, but a good range of activities such as 'Morning Maths' and regular opportunities for mental mathematics activities are helping pupils achieve more. Although achievement is now satisfactory, the lack of a consistency of good, or better, teaching means that not all pupils are able to reach the standards of which they are fully capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities and talk enthusiastically about their visits out of school, such as that to the National Space Centre. Attendance is broadly average and the school is successfully using a range of strategies to improve it. Pupils feel that the introduction of 'playground buddies' and 'golden rules' have had a positive impact on their behaviour. They say that any instances of bullying are rare and when they do occur they are effectively dealt with. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although some pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of the cultural diversity within today's society. Pupils' good understanding of keeping safe and leading a healthy lifestyle are shown in the sensible, yet enthusiastic way pupils are using the new 'trim trail'. Pupils are effectively involved in decision making through the class and school councils, and make an important contribution to the local community through links with the Neighbourhood Wardens and the Walsall Housing Group.

Pupils have good opportunities to develop enterprise and financial skills through, for example, the running of the school's stationery shop. The experience gained from such opportunities, together with satisfactory basic skills, helps pupils prepare soundly for their next stage of education and future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning are a strong feature of every lesson and are encouraged greatly by adults' appropriate use of praise. Teachers always make clear at the start the expectations of what pupils of different abilities have to achieve. This usually stems from good planning which takes into account pupils' prior knowledge and understanding and what pupils need to do next to reach their targets. In a small minority of lessons, however, there is not enough challenge for pupils of all abilities to make as much progress as they could. The amount of good teaching has increased since the time of the last inspection, particularly because of the better match of work to pupils' needs. It is not good consistently enough, however, to ensure that all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable. Adults question pupils well but, in a significant number of lessons, pupils are not given enough time to talk, to explain their reasoning, or compare each other's answers. This is a prime example of the opportunities that are being missed to further develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics and a range of effective initiatives has been introduced to support learning in these areas. For example, pupils come to school ten minutes early to take part in the 'Morning Maths' sessions which, as one pupil commented, 'really sharpens up our mental maths skills'. It also encourages good punctuality. However, too few opportunities are given for pupils to practise and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in different subjects. The overuse of worksheets contributes to this and prevents pupils from taking greater responsibility for their own learning. An effective programme for personal development helps pupils understand the importance of staying safe, fit and healthy. A good range of sporting activities during the day and visits out of school extend pupils' learning experiences well and pupils really enjoy these. However, opportunities to develop pupils' talents and enjoyment of the visual and creative arts by visitors to the school, or through after school clubs, are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for in a safe, welcoming learning environment. One pupil said, 'Everyone is pleasant and they smile a lot.' Relationships are good and pupils know there is always someone with whom to talk over any worries or concerns. Procedures for child protection and all other checks to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being are in place and meet current requirements.

The good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables these pupils to be fully included in all activities and achieve as well as their classmates. The learning mentor and other staff sensitively support the more vulnerable pupils and outside agencies provide valuable specialist input when needed. Pupils' academic progress is regularly monitored and pupils know their learning targets. However, teachers' marking, although better in English than

mathematics, is not used consistently throughout the school to show pupils what they have done well or how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership has improved since the time of the last inspection and there is a strong commitment by everyone within the school community to raising standards. There is a rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, enhanced considerably by the increasingly effective pupil tracking procedures. Consequently, senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear plan to bring about improvement. Their success is evident in the much better progress that all pupils are making and also in the changed culture of the school. One parent described this as, 'a nicer atmosphere' and others talk about how much it has enhanced their children's personal development and well-being, especially for those who are most vulnerable. The confidence and skills of the core subject leaders are developing well as a result of good support from Education Walsall. The school rightly recognises the need for these leaders to make better use of the good assessment information that now exists, to improve their subjects still further. The vast majority of parents hold positive views of the school, although some disappointment is expressed about the limited number of after-school clubs and activities.

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
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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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	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?	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	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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Short Heath Junior School, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV12 4DS

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when the inspection team visited Short Heath recently. We were pleased to see you enjoying yourselves, as well as getting good exercise, on the new 'trim trail'. This is just one of the many improvements that has been made in your school recently. They all have helped to provide you with a satisfactory, and improving, quality of education. Most importantly, you are all making better progress than you were and, as a result, you are reaching higher standards in your work. The leaders and all the staff in your school have worked hard to enable this and you have played your part by having good attitudes in lessons and trying your best. Well done and please remember to keep this up!

- These are some of the other good things that are happening:
 - your behaviour is good
 - the adults look after you very well and support you in your learning
 - more of your teaching is good and much better than it used to be, because it takes account of your different needs and capabilities
 - most of you are developing a good understanding of how to keep safe and live healthily
 - you are being set challenging targets and the leaders of your school are looking carefully at the progress that you are making.
- Your school has become much better at working out what is going well and what needs to be improved. These are the most important things to do to make it even better:
 - help you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that the teaching in your lessons is at least good all the time
 - provide you with more opportunities to practise and develop your skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects
 - always mark your work carefully so that you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

We hope you will all keep smiling as you try to make your school even better.

With best wishes. Yours sincerely

Peter Callow Lead inspector

29 February 2008

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We hope you will all keep smiling as you try to make your school even better.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Callow
Lead inspector