

County Bridge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104189
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	308536
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Adams
Headteacher	Greg Anthony Higgs
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 0001
School address	Anson Road Bentley Walsall WS2 0DH
Telephone number	01922 720718
Fax number	01922 720718

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school whose pupils come from a very wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average and very few pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The main other language is Punjabi. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below the level expected nationally, and some children have very weak literacy, numeracy and social and emotional skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average, although there is some variation between years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Standards are below average but are rising. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress due to consistently good teaching matched well to their learning and social needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school has a clear view of what it needs to do to improve. The headteacher and others in positions of responsibility have introduced changes, though some rather slowly, to improve achievement, and they are starting to have a positive impact. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers make sure that work is matched to pupils' abilities. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to increase their vocabulary, to speak or to discuss their work and to write independently. This limits how well pupils do in all subjects. As well as this, in some lessons too much chatter from a minority of pupils distracts others and slows their progress, and teachers do not always stop this before it becomes disruptive. Nevertheless, parents are happy with how well their children do at school. One parent commented, 'Even though our child is not top of the class, he moves forward with his learning'. The curriculum is satisfactory. Subjects are planned to meet pupils' learning needs, especially their social needs, and visits and visitors make school interesting for pupils. There is an adequate range of activities out of school time, especially sports, and pupils enjoy taking part in these.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and mostly behave well. They are a little noisy in some lessons, which distracts other pupils, and occasionally a little overexcited in how they play at lunchtimes. At other times they are considerate of other pupils and behave safely. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and most of the time make good choices about what they eat. They are pleased and proud to make suggestions about how the school could improve, and appreciate that the school takes notice of their ideas. For example, pupils were delighted that the school provided better playground equipment as a result of their suggestions.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Teachers and other adults provide good care for pupils and they feel safe and secure in spite of the boisterous play at lunchtimes. Relationships with homes and families are good and parents appreciate the level of support they and their children receive. The school tracks how well pupils make progress and uses that information to plan work and to set targets for pupils. Most pupils, but not all, know what their targets are and how to reach them.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children achieve well. They reach levels of skills below those expected on entry to Year 1, but this represents good progress from their low starting points. Teaching is well matched to children's interests, and they are provided with a stimulating, carefully planned curriculum, based on a close knowledge of their needs. The curriculum for the recently refurbished outdoor facilities is satisfactory and being reviewed in order to make best use of the new opportunities it provides.

Most children settle quickly into the Nursery and later the Reception class, because the transition process is flexible and sensitive to children's and parents' needs. Because of the good level of

care, support and guidance provided, children's social and personal skills develop rapidly and by the time they leave the Foundation Stage, children share and take turns politely, listen attentively and sit still when required

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards throughout the school by providing more opportunities for pupils to widen their vocabulary, to talk about their understanding and to write independently.
- Increase the pace of learning in lessons by ensuring that pupils are fully focused on their work and do not distract others.

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 below average overall but are rising. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, whatever their prior attainment or background, and is improving after some deterioration in recent years. This is due in the main to an improving match of work to pupils' learning needs and to early support for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, reflecting successful work to improve provision since the last inspection.

Despite recent improvements, pupils still have weaknesses in their literacy skills. This is especially noticeable in their narrow vocabulary, limited skill in talking about their work and explaining their understanding, and in sentence structure. This restricts their progress in all subjects, including their ability to write independently.

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress because teachers are sensitive to children's needs and provide a wide range of activities that catch children's interest and help them play and work together successfully.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They have a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet and physical exercise. Most pupils behave well and pay good attention to safety. For example, when involved in practising their dance routines for 'Grease', they moved around carefully so that they did not collide with each other. There is occasional bullying, but it is dealt with well when reported. In lessons, a small number of pupils occasionally demonstrate disruptive behaviour, which distracts others from their work. At lunchtime, despite recent improvements, behaviour is occasionally too boisterous, an issue the school is aware of and working to improve.

Pupils make a sound contribution to the school and wider community. For instance, they act as members of the school council to promote pupils' viewpoints, and are involved in charity work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and they have a sound awareness of the range of faiths and cultures in Britain. Satisfactory achievement, sound social skills and average skills in ICT provide a secure preparation for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers make the purpose of lessons very clear, so pupils know what they are trying to achieve. The work set provides pupils of all abilities with a suitable level of challenge, and most pupils respond by working steadily. Marking and feedback by teachers provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve work, especially in writing. Cordial relationships between teachers and pupils encourage most pupils to be motivated to learn. However, in some lessons, fidgeting and chatting, which is not controlled at an early enough stage, slows the pace of learning for all pupils. In a small number of lessons, insufficient attention is paid to developing pupils' language skills, for example by introducing them to specialist vocabulary in science, or helping them to develop their ideas in depth through skilful questioning and discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Work is carefully planned to provide activities matched to pupils' needs. In particular, there is a successful focus on developing pupils' social skills through personal, social and health education. However, opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills are missed. There are too few planned speaking activities to engage pupils in discussion, explanation and presentation of their work. The provision for ICT is good.

The range of activities to enliven the curriculum is broadly satisfactory, with visits, visitors, and residential trips that successfully help develop pupils' social skills. Out of school activities include a wide choice of sports, which are well supported by pupils, and a smaller range of art, music and cultural activities.

A small minority of pupils have difficulty settling into Year 1. To overcome this, the school appropriately arranges for Reception children to join with Year 1 classes before they transfer fully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school promotes pupils' welfare well, especially that of the relatively large number of children with particular needs. Staff work well, in partnership with a wide range of agencies, parents and with other schools, to improve the level of support for individuals. Safeguarding procedures operate effectively. However, some slightly overexcited behaviour at lunchtime is not always dealt with as well as it could be because supervisors have not had behaviour management training. Tracking of pupils' progress is effective in identifying when underachievement occurs and is used effectively to ensure work is matched to pupils' needs. In some classes, pupils know what their short-term targets are and use them well to improve their work, but this is not consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives clear direction for improvement and he is well supported by staff. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and is making satisfactory progress in dealing with the areas where it needs to improve. Subject leaders, identified at the previous inspection as being ineffective, have introduced improvements that are having a positive effect on achievement. The pace of change has been a little slow and some of the improvements have been recent. Nevertheless, the school has dealt with the issues from the previous inspection and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and are well informed about the school. They are actively involved in setting realistic academic targets. However, until recently, they have not pushed the pace of change fast enough.

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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?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

County Bridge Primary School, Walsall, WS2 0DH

Thank you for making our time in your school enjoyable. We spoke to many of you in lessons, around school and in a meeting. You told us a lot about your school and how much you enjoy it, and you were very helpful.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- you are at a satisfactory and improving school
- your progress is satisfactory and it is improving, although the standards you reach are below average
- teaching is satisfactory and most work is planned with your learning needs in mind
- teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception and those of you there make good progress
- most of you behave well; you enjoy school, and your attendance is good
- you understand how important it is to eat healthily and take exercise and many of you choose sensible things to eat. Most of you take part in physical activities.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- make sure that you make better progress in all subjects by learning a wider range of words to do with schoolwork, speak more about what you do and write independently
- make sure that you concentrate more on what you do in lessons so that you do not distract other pupils and you learn faster.

You can help the school do better by trying to work hard without distracting other pupils by talking too much.

With best wishes

Ted Wheatley Lead inspector