

Walsall Wood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104201
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	308539
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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	P Baynham-Hughes
Headteacher	Robert Trawford
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Brownhills Road Brownhills Walsall WS8 7BP
Telephone number	01543 452664
Fax number	01543 453105

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 middle-sized primary school with a grant funded nursery class. The school has increased in size considerably since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low and none is at an early stage of learning English.

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 and improving school. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has led a transformation from a satisfactory school at the time of the last inspection. He has shared his vision for improvement most effectively and passionately. He has inspired confidence in all members of the school community in their ability to improve. There is recognition that this journey is not over and there is a strong determination from everyone within the school to improve further.

Central to the vision has been improving the quality of teaching and learning, which has been supported by a range of effective strategies throughout the school. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and standards have improved accordingly. Achievement is now good and standards are average, having improved in each of the last three years. They are weaker in writing at both key stages. There is usually a careful match between learning and a pupil's needs although occasionally in writing, targets do not challenge more able pupils enough. The Foundation Stage is a significant strength of the school providing a stimulating and well-ordered start to school life.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The school environment is stimulating and attractive and a strong focus on providing opportunities to improve pupils' basic skills is now firmly in place. Personal and social development has been promoted particularly well. This has resulted in pupils demonstrating considerable care for each other in their work and in their play. Opportunities provided within the curriculum to promote cultural development are currently limited.

A clear set of family values underpins the school's caring and supportive environment. Relationships are friendly and all pupils feel valued. They feel safe and confident within this well-ordered and well-maintained setting. Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably as a result. Pupils readily adopt the strong emphasis on developing healthy lifestyles, welcoming opportunities to eat fruit and wholemeal toast. For most pupils, playtime exercise is self-regulated. Pupils are keen to volunteer for responsibilities and contribute to the general good of their school community. Year 5 pupils run a healthy tuck shop every break time, for example.

The school has developed good partnerships to support and enhance its work. The strong link with Shire Oak Science College has made a significant contribution to raising standards in science and mathematics. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and particularly praise its improvement. This comment from one parent is typical: 'My son is taught in an exceptionally fun but educational manner under a wonderful umbrella of care'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good, and it is outstanding in the area of personal development. Children get off to a flying start because of the good provision in both the Nursery and Reception. Children enter the school with a wide range of abilities but overall they are below the expected levels. Within a few days, children have become very familiar with the well thought out routines. They quickly respond to adults and relate well to one another.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and this results in good progress and achievement in all areas except personal development, where it is excellent. Children know that

adults value them from the welcome they receive on arrival. Well-planned lessons contain a good mix of adult-led and child-chosen activities. Support staff and parent helpers give good support to group activities but are used less effectively in introductory sessions. Language skills are taught very effectively in the Nursery using a programme designed to stimulate curiosity. This is leading to good gains in language levels. Good modelling of speech by adults has a positive impact on developing speaking and listening skills. There are some missed opportunities to develop understanding of written words, particularly in the sand and water play areas. Effective use is made of indoor and outdoor space.

Regular assessment and monitoring of children's work ensure that staff can match work accurately to individual need. Parents receive appropriate information about their children's progress and are encouraged to help them at home. The Foundation Stage is well led. There is good teamwork and adults act as excellent role models for the children. There is a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development and a striving to keep on improving and raising standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards for more able pupils in writing.
- Increase the range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures and beliefs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is good and improving. This is a major improvement since the national tests in 2004, when data showed that many pupils were not achieving as well as they should. In science, highlighted as a weakness in the last inspection, standards have improved significantly and in 2006, Year 6 pupils made exceptional progress.

The school recognises that achievement is weaker in writing. There has been much improvement and pupils are now reaching broadly average standards, but few reach the highest level. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Teaching assistants support them well both in the classroom and through a number of programmes that give extra help. Teachers plan well for their individual needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. They enjoy coming to school and talk with pride of the improvements that they feel they have helped to put in place. Their attendance is improving and is broadly average. Very few pupils now miss school without good reason. The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good and contributes well to the harmonious relationships within school. Older pupils are particularly caring towards younger ones, helping them in the playground and at the family tables at lunchtimes. This contributes to a strong sense of community within the school. Pupils take this spirit out of school through a range of activities within the local area where they share their time and talents with the elderly at a local day centre, for example. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures and beliefs from further afield. As a result, cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have confidence in adults to help with any problems. Incidents of bullying or racism are rare but when they do occur, pupils are confident that they are dealt

with appropriately. Good basic and interpersonal skills develop through a range of activities like planning and costing the end-of-year visit and raising funds to support it. This contributes towards good preparation for pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Assessment is used effectively to match learning to needs. Pupils are given regular opportunities to assess their own work. All teachers plan their teaching effectively to meet the learning styles of different pupils. There is a good emphasis on visual learning. Teachers use a host of different items to stimulate pupils. The use of a model alien really brought a Year 5 'Big Writing' lesson to life. Clear, easily understood learning objectives help pupils understand what they are going to learn. In most lessons a brisk pace and innovative methods stimulate interest. On the odd occasion where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, introductions are too long, pupils become a little restless, and learning time is lost. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with 'talking partners' and this has a very positive effect on learning. Regular use of questioning and discussion of answers moves learning forward but sometimes teachers do not ask a wide range of pupils. The development of vocabulary is good in most lessons but there are some missed opportunities to reinforce this with the use of written words.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There has rightly been a very strong emphasis in planning the curriculum on developing skills in the key subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology, resulting in improved standards. Pupils from a very early age understand the need for healthy living through a wide range of activities within the school's curriculum. Special activities such as science week and a residential visit have a positive effect on developing social and personal skills. There are fewer opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs. Visits and visitors, including actors playing historical figures such as Henry VIII, bring the curriculum to life. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances learning. Pupils talk about their out of school activities with eagerness, and many arrive early and stay beyond the end of the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Providing additional support for pupils is a strong feature of the school's work. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and they make good progress against individual targets. Vulnerable children receive high quality support and teachers, support staff and the learning mentor very effectively monitor their progress. Child protection procedures and arrangements to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements.

The school takes good care of all its pupils within a warm and welcoming environment. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessments, are well established. Both parents and pupils welcome improvements to security over recent years.

Pupils are effectively guided in their learning by their individual targets. They help them to know how to improve their work. Most marking gives good feedback to pupils on what they

have achieved in a piece of work and what they need to work on next. However, there are some inconsistencies and it does not always challenge more able pupils to aspire to higher levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Many of the plans implemented by the school's excellent leadership are now well established. They are leading to an improvement in standards and pupils' attitudes to learning. The school's leadership has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses indicating that there is good capacity for further improvement. Plans clearly identify the improvements that are still to be made. Planning is well supported by the senior leadership's thorough use of data, which has been effectively used to reduce gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils. There are good systems in place for sharing this information with all staff and it is used to set challenging targets for pupils which are regularly revised. Subject coordinators have varying levels of experience in using data in their subjects to inform planning, but leadership roles are well developed in key areas and such staff are in a good position to help spread that good practice throughout the school. Governors' effectiveness has improved. They have worked hard to increase their understanding of the school's work and now contribute effectively towards school improvement.

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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	1
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

14 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walsall Wood Primary School, Walsall, WS8 7BP

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome on our recent visit to your school. I would like to share with you what I learned about the school.

- It is a good school and improving fast.
- You make good progress in your work and reach standards which are average.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well indeed, which is the main reason why things are improving so quickly.
- All staff care for you well and support you to do your best. As a result, you feel happy and safe in school. There is always someone to help if you have a problem.
- You enjoy the interesting lessons which are taught. You love taking part in the many activities on offer. You eat healthily and know how to keep fit.
- The older pupils take care of younger pupils very well in the playground and when you share meals together.
- You find that lessons like 'You Can Do It' help to boost your confidence.
- You find your target cards helpful. The marking in your work is also helpful in telling you how well you have done and what to do next. We think some of you could manage more of a challenge to achieve higher levels in your writing so we are asking your teachers to make sure this happens.
- You give good help to the community in your local area. We are asking teachers to include more work on cultures and beliefs that are different from your own so that your understanding of the wider world grows.

I hope you will help your headteacher and staff to keep your school as good as it has become and to put in place the plans which will make it even better. I think 'You Can Do It'.

Ruth Westbrook Lead Inspector



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Ruth Westbrook
Lead Inspector