

Smallwood CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111257
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310545
Inspection date	13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Ball
Headteacher	Mrs G Moores
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	School Lane Smallwood Nr Sandbach Cheshire CW11 2UR
Telephone number	01477 500362
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's management on pupils' current progress and standards in English, mathematics and science and on their personal development and well-being. The quality of teaching and learning and the quality of pupils' academic guidance were reviewed. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's records of pupils' progress. Policies, attendance and financial data were checked and observation of the school at work was undertaken. The chair of governors, the vicar, staff and pupils were also interviewed. The views of the parents were canvassed via a questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This village school is much smaller than average but pupil numbers have risen since the last inspection because it is a popular choice for parents not only locally but also from further away. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. A higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved a number of national awards for its work on the curriculum. These include Healthy School, Activemark Gold, Inclusion Quality Mark, Naace and Becta Awards (for information and communication technology) and Silver Eco award. The current headteacher and assistant headteacher have been in post for less than one year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents who returned the questionnaire said that the school was 'fantastic', 'excellent' and had a 'superb reputation'. The inspector confirms these comments and agrees with the senior managers' view that this is an outstanding school. It gives its pupils an outstanding education enabling them to make rapid progress and reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Extremely challenging test targets are set annually by the governing body and are often exceeded. The school also helps pupils grow in self-confidence and become exceptional citizens. The head and assistant headteacher have quickly formed a highly effective partnership which is continuing to take the school forward. For example, the procedures for tracking pupils' progress are now computerised and used very effectively to ensure that all pupils reach their potential. Since the last inspection, standards are even higher and pupils get extensive opportunities to use their literacy skills in other subjects. These improvements, coupled with the very good awareness that senior managers and the governing body have of the very many strengths and few areas for development the school has, indicates that that the school has exceptional capacity to improve further. It provides outstanding value for money.

Pupils have an exceptional start to their education in the Foundation Stage where teaching is very effective and children make rapid progress. Good teaching in Key Stage 1 helps pupils consolidate their skills. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils make outstanding progress because highly effective teaching involves pupils in the learning process. For example, pupils know and make effective use of the system of learning targets and older pupils even write their own! They say, 'We try even harder to reach them because we have set them ourselves.' Most know how to improve their work because teachers' marking is exceptionally helpful to them but there are some minor inconsistencies to this picture across classes. The needs of all pupils are very well met, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, their progress on the many very good additional programmes offered by the school is checked much more regularly than in most schools. The terrific range of pupils' work displayed around the school is indicative of the excellent curriculum the school offers its pupils. It goes well beyond that which is required and aids pupils' enjoyment of school and love of learning. All pupils learn Spanish, changed from French at the request of parents. All have opportunities to study music and singing and to have instrumental tuition with specialist teachers. There are regular plays and musicals to take part in and a teacher of information and communication technology gives them the ability to handle complex computer programs with skill. Pupils even look after chickens!

The enjoyment all pupils get from school and from its exceptional curriculum can be seen in their enthusiasm for learning and in their happy faces. They say that they feel safe and know that the staff are always 'there to help us'. There is no bullying, they say, because 'we are all friends here'. They have an outstanding knowledge of how to stay healthy. Not only can they fully explain the need for exercise and a healthy diet, they also praise the opportunities to clear their thoughts when the candle is lit for reflection time during assemblies. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme also plays a key role because, in their words, 'It helps us build self-confidence and team work.' Their excellent understanding of the harmful effects of smoking, alcohol and non-medical drugs, and the scientific language they use to explain their views, shows how much they have learned in their science lessons.

Attendance is above average but has declined from the exceptional levels of last year because too many parents take pupils away from school for annual holidays during term time.

Pupils behave well in class and outside in the yard. They are attentive to each other and to their teachers and very keen to learn. They care deeply for each other; for example, they sit and chat happily in mixed age groups at lunchtime and play leaders teach games to youngsters on the yard. The active school council debates the views of the pupils and puts resolutions to senior managers. For example, it made suggestions about the reward scheme and the house system and both were adopted. It also manages its own budget. The church and the village are extensions of the learning environment. Pupils entertain the community with carol singing and nativity plays and the community shares their skills. During a very successful 'community week' scientists, artists and many others came into school to work with the pupils.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next school. They can confidently use their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in a wide variety of situations. At the same time they are well-rounded individuals in that they have high levels of self-esteem, they can work independently or in groups and they have a great love of learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is of high quality and enables children to make exceptional progress from their various starting points. The key factors making the provision so effective are the high ratio of skilled adults to children, the excellent use of regular assessment data to plan the next stages in children's learning and the lively and engaging way that sessions are delivered. Children start Reception class with the skills and knowledge expected for their age and leave with most having reached, or exceeded the goals anticipated for their age. After they have settled in, which in most cases does not take long, children quickly become confident and self-assured. Parents say their children enjoy learning, and observation of them at work bears this out. Rapid strides are made in their understanding letter sounds and they are keen to share their emerging reading skills. Children confidently use their knowledge of number to find the missing number in a sequence. Induction procedures are excellent, with the use of Year 5 pupils as 'buddies' making a lasting impression on all the pupils involved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils know how to improve their work further.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

You and your parents told me that yours is a 'fantastic school' and I agree that it is outstanding. You do so many things well at your school that it is hard to know where to start! First, all your teachers do a terrific job of helping you learn and make progress in English, mathematics and science. Second, you have so many opportunities to take part in exciting things like sports, plays, music, Spanish, visits and computing, as well as 'normal' lessons. Third, your teachers encourage you to take responsibility, to work together, to establish your own learning targets and to help each other.

You respond very well to the challenges the school presents you. For example, everyone performed confidently in the carol and poetry concert in front of your parents. You have a wonderful understanding of how to stay fit and really enjoy the extensive range of after-school clubs the staff offer. You told me that you feel safe in school and I can see why. Staff take great care of you and you take good care of each other. The school council is instrumental in sharing your views of school with the headteacher. It is great to see that their suggestions have been taken up, like changes to the school rules. You make extensive use of the church and the village in your work and it was really good to see that people from the village came into school to work with you. I thought that the work you did for the children of the African school was wonderful.

One of the reasons your school is outstanding is because your headteacher and her staff are always looking for ways to improve even more. I have asked them to do one thing which will improve your learning further:

- make sure that all your teachers tell you how to improve your work further when they mark what you have done.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to come to school every day, to study hard and to always do your best. Thank you very much for helping me with the inspection. I really enjoyed visiting your school and listening to your views, which you expressed so well. You are right to be proud of everything that you, your teachers and the governing body have achieved for your school. I wish you well for the future.