

Droitwich, Chawson First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116672
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312363
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Steele
Headteacher	Gerard Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
School address	Wych Road Droitwich WR9 8BW
Telephone number	01905 773264
Fax number	01905 773264

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average first school. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with only a very few from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the school is similar to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to this good school as they find learning exciting. This is because the school has made some significant changes including reorganising and strengthening the curriculum. As a result, teachers are planning regular 'theme weeks' that draw together work from different subjects and capitalise on pupils' interests and curiosity. During these events, pupils participate in numerous educational visits. They also engage in creative and practical activities that make good use of all that they have learned previously. Parents recognise and appreciate the good quality of education that their children receive. Many praise the school very highly, with typical comments including, 'I couldn't be happier with this school'. They also value the work staff do to hold regular workshops for parents to explain teaching strategies and encourage them to become fully involved in their children's education.

Teachers know their pupils well. They provide stimulating classrooms and endeavour to ensure that pupils achieve their potential. They teach good lessons that engage pupils successfully and help them to develop. This approach ensures that pupils make good progress across the school. When children join the Reception Year they get off to a good start by settling quickly into school life. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils are prepared well for the start of Year 1. Pupils continue to do well in Key Stage 1 and achieve above average standards. By the time they leave school they are confident learners, having achieved the standards expected in reading and mathematics, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, standards in writing are not as high. This is because teachers' marking does not provide pupils with sufficient guidance about how they could improve their work. As a result, the school does not collect enough useful information to track pupils' progress accurately, which can then be used to set focused individual targets for pupils.

Pupils' personal development is good and their behaviour is outstanding. This is because of the headteacher's determination to ensure that all pupils achieve their best. His commitment and strong leadership are appreciated by many parents. His approachable, 'hands-on' leadership ensures good levels of discipline and makes learning fun. He is supported well by the staff and governors who work together successfully to identify future priorities.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good induction arrangements, whereby every family receives a home visit, help children to settle quickly into school. Children enter with a wide range of experiences and abilities but their attainment is broadly average with the exception of boys' language, which is often a little lower. Teaching is good with excellent relationships and a well planned curriculum. For example, the Forest School project provides children with outstanding opportunities to develop self-esteem, personal skills, knowledge and self-confidence within a safe and exciting outdoor classroom. Staff are receptive to children's interests and plan activities that are meaningful and interesting. This good provision ensures that they make good progress and are well prepared for the start of Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing in Years 3 and 4.

- Improve the quality of marking and make more consistent use of pupils' individual targets so that they have a better understanding of the progress they are making and how they can improve.
- Strengthen the school's procedures to track pupils' progress accurately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start school they arrive with varying levels of skills and experiences but, overall, standards are broadly average. The exception is in boys' language skills, which are often lower than expected. Children achieve well in their Reception Year and, by the start of Year 1, they have reached the standards expected, although this is not the case for boys' writing.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and all achieve standards that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 4, pupils' standards in reading and mathematics have continued to rise but progress in writing has slowed and attainment is subsequently lower than expected. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in all year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are eager to get on with their work and they talk about all aspects of school with enthusiasm. Attendance levels have improved and are now close to average. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Older pupils set a very good example for the younger ones. Pupils of all ages act responsibly and are able to work independently. They also work very well in pairs and groups and are able to sustain interest in activities. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. They participate enthusiastically during assemblies. Their singing is excellent and they listen with enjoyment to the stories told. They reflect on and discuss important issues and, as a result, have a well developed sense of right and wrong. Their social development is good and they have a satisfactory knowledge of other cultures. Pupils also have a good understanding of the importance of developing healthy lifestyles. They are active on the spacious playgrounds and many take advantage of the opportunities for physical activities after school. They are increasingly aware of the need to eat sensibly although the content of their lunchboxes does not always reflect this. The school is successful in its efforts to ensure that pupils feel safe in school and that they learn how to take care of themselves through the acquisition of safe working practices. Pupils contribute well to the school and the wider community. Their acquisition of skills to prepare them for the next stage of their education is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching is one of the main reasons why pupils make good progress. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff create a very good atmosphere for learning. Teachers' good knowledge of their subjects enables them to teach lessons that are planned well and link to pupils' interests. They make good use of information and communication technology in their lessons. In the best lessons pupils are actively engaged in tasks that are well matched to their ability. Teachers use skilful questioning to help pupils think, recall and build on previous learning.

Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers and make a significant contribution to the lesson by providing valuable support to individuals or groups of pupils. Marking is carried out regularly but does not always inform pupils clearly enough about how they can improve their work or how much progress they have made towards achieving their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Since the last inspection the school has strengthened the curriculum significantly by improving links between subjects and this has added to pupils' enjoyment of learning. This is because the lessons are very well matched to the interests and abilities of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This approach ensures that there is a strong and appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in practical and interesting contexts. This was particularly evident as Year 4 pupils used mathematical skills, design and art to very good effect when working on their Egyptian project. The success of this approach is highlighted by the comments of many pupils and parents who say that lessons are fun and that they make learning interesting. The curriculum is also enriched in other ways that capture pupils' interests. The inclusion of the outdoor classroom projects, 'Forest School' in the Reception Year and 'Boot Camp' for Year 1 pupils, makes a significant contribution to pupils' good progress and development across the Foundation Stage and Year 1. There is also a good range of well attended clubs and many educational outings that add to and enrich the pupils' experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils thrive in an environment that encourages the development of their confidence and willingness to learn. Their care and welfare are given a high priority by all adults. Health and safety procedures, including the briefing of all new staff, are very good. There are regular fire drills and excellent first aid arrangements. The school has adopted robust recruitment procedures, including safeguards for pupils' welfare. Simple but effective systems within school ensure that concerns or special arrangements for individual children are communicated quickly and effectively to all staff. Attendance is monitored regularly and action to improve attendance has been implemented with some success. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are closely supported in classes. Parents receive information about the next steps their children need to take in their learning. However, the school's procedures to track pupils' progress accurately are underdeveloped and, as a result, the achievement targets set for individual pupils are not precise enough. The arrangements for introducing pupils to their next school are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is passionate in his desire to ensure that all the pupils achieve their full potential. He is ably supported by a committed and experienced team who work together successfully to monitor the school's performance in order to obtain a very clear view of the school's strengths and the areas to improve. As a result, there is a common sense of purpose among staff and governors to make things better. For example, the subject leaders make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. From their monitoring activities they have developed a good understanding of standards and achievement

in their particular subject. Their analyses inform the leadership's evaluation and direct the school's drive to raise standards. This approach has already led to several improvements including a specific focus on teaching phonics resulting in literacy standards rising in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Governors have a good understanding of their role and discharge their responsibilities very effectively. They make a positive contribution to the school's strategic leadership by holding the leaders to account and ensuring that they are fully informed about the school's performance. They are also actively involved in discussing and agreeing the future improvement priorities for the school and setting targets to be used as a measure of progress.

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?	1
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	2
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	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	1
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?	1
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	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	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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Droitwich Chawson First School, Droitwich, WR9 8BW

Thank you for making us feel welcome when we visited your school in October 2007 to see how well it was doing.

We were very impressed with your very high standard of behaviour and how polite you are in school. We noticed how kind and caring you are towards each other and how well you are looked after by the staff. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and we particularly noticed how enthusiastically you responded in assembly to the singing and to your headteacher's stories. We also thought that your headteacher does a very good job in making sure that you have every opportunity to do well. He is supported well by the staff who work hard to provide lessons that you find interesting and so help you to learn. You also told us you like coming to school because of all the fun things that you do and all the trips you go on. We saw what you meant when we visited Year 4. They were learning about the Egyptians but were very busy using their mathematical and design skills well to prepare detailed drawings of the object they were going to build to place in the Pharaoh's tomb. We have asked the adults in charge of the school to improve the school in a few areas. These link well with the school leaders' plans to make things even better. These include helping you to improve your standards in writing, setting you individual targets and marking your work carefully so that you know how to do better. We have also asked them to improve the school's systems for monitoring your progress.

We hope that your school continues to flourish and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Ken Buxton HMI Lead inspector

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