

Clarice Cliff Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124008
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314777
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims

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	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Williams
Headteacher	Gill Latos
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Golden Hill Rd. Fenton Stoke-on-Trent ST4 3DP
Telephone number	01782 881480
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Clarice Cliff Primary School is an amalgamation of the former Grafton Infant School and Queen's Primary School and opened in September 2005. It operated on two sites until January 2008, when it moved into the new building. It is much larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, who speak English as an additional language, who are eligible for free school meals and who have learning difficulties are all above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Clarice Cliff Primary School has quickly established itself as a good school. The amalgamation of the two former schools has been managed exceptionally well. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and receives very good support from senior colleagues and governors. These factors have enabled the school to establish a distinctive ethos and a common sense of purpose amongst staff and pupils. The outstanding quality of the displays in each classroom has transformed the good new facilities into an exceptionally attractive learning environment. Parents are appreciative of the way the amalgamation has been managed and are pleased with the quality of education their children are receiving.

The quality of the teaching, the curricular provision and the care, guidance and support provided by the teaching and non-teaching staff is good. In each of these areas, there are significant strengths which are helping pupils of all abilities and from a range of different backgrounds to make good progress academically and particularly good progress in their personal development. The strong emphasis on providing a creative curriculum and a wide range of additional activities interests and motivates the pupils to learn. The teachers use a good variety of teaching techniques and particularly encourage active and collaborative learning, which develops pupils' communication and social skills and their self-confidence. Because of good procedures to track pupils' progress, staff identify quickly which pupils need additional support. A wide range of intervention procedures, breakfast clubs to promote pupils' learning, and effective use of teaching assistants to support individuals or small groups ensure that the needs of those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language are met effectively.

When the school opened, pupils entered each year group with widely varying previous educational experiences, but the overall standard of attainment on entry has been below average. Pupils' language skills and personal development have been particularly weak. Pupils have achieved well, therefore, to reach the broadly average standards which are now evident at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Writing, however, is still the weakest aspect of the pupils' work and is currently the main focus of the school's development plan. Lack of pace and challenge in some of the teaching, not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length, insufficient feedback in the marking of pupils' work and not enough insistence on writing accurately or presenting work carefully contribute to the weaknesses in this area.

The strong emphasis on pupils' personal development has led to rapid progress in this area so that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, their understanding of healthy lifestyles and safe practices, their contribution to the school and wider community and their preparation for the future all develop to a good level.

Binding all of these factors together is good leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher has developed a strong team of leaders who are well trained and eager to carry out their responsibilities. Management systems are good and thorough, but some of the evaluation of teaching, learning and pupils' work is not yet rigorous enough in identifying weaknesses which, if rectified, would enable pupils to achieve at a higher level, particularly in their written work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's knowledge and skills on entry to Nursery are below those expected for their age. Their social development and language and communication skills are well below the expected level. However, children make a good start to their learning because leadership is effective and well focused, and the teaching is good. Good induction procedures ensure children settle quickly and happily into school routines and, as a result of the staff's encouragement, children quickly learn to make choices and develop independence. Good emphasis is placed on developing the children's spoken language, and recently introduced initiatives are having a positive impact on their achievement. The well-planned curriculum, which is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors, and the very attractive learning environment extend the children's first-hand experiences and enjoyment of learning. Good assessment procedures lead to work which is well matched to children's individual needs. As a result, children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. Writing and linking sounds to letters are the weakest aspects of children's work but in other areas, standards are broadly average by the time they enter Year 1. Although the outdoor area is used regularly throughout the day, the opportunities to develop children's learning experience outside are limited at present. Plans are in place to improve the attractiveness of this area. Staff work together well as a team, and parents are appreciative of the help they receive to support their children's learning at home.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Improve the quality and presentation of pupils' written work and broaden the range of opportunities for pupils to consolidate their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Provide more helpful guidance to pupils when marking their work, enabling them to see where they have made mistakes and what they need to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities and in all year groups achieve well and have made demonstrable progress from their differing starting points since the school opened. The 2007 assessment and test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 improved on those in 2006. Indications are that results are likely to improve again in 2008. The school sets itself challenging targets and has been successful in meeting most of these. Standards are now broadly average in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. Pupils have made particularly good progress in reading, speaking and listening as a result of the emphasis given to these aspects of English. Pupils' writing skills, however, are weaker than their reading and mathematical skills, and their work is not always well presented. Standards in mathematics have risen this year, as has the proportion of pupils who are on track to achieve Level 5 in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. A number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English have made rapid progress as a result of the attention given to them. Pupils with learning difficulties also make good progress because of the support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the supportive nature of the school enable pupils to make rapid progress from the well below average levels of personal development

displayed when they start school. Children settle well in the Nursery and Reception classes. Behaviour throughout the school is good and the occasional instances of poor behaviour are handled effectively by the staff. Pupils show respect for others and say there is virtually no bullying in the school, factors which demonstrate pupils' awareness and adoption of safe practices. They show good understanding of what they need to do to lead healthy lives, and increasing numbers are opting to eat healthy food at lunchtimes. The level of attendance has improved since the school opened and is now just below the national average. The pupils like school and participate well in class, particularly when actively engaged. Although there is scope for widening the range of responsibilities undertaken, pupils make a good contribution to the running of the school, for example through the active school council or acting as play leaders or peer mediators. They contribute to the wider community by raising funds for charity. Despite the relative weakness in their writing skills, pupils' good progress in developing other basic skills, their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their ability to collaborate well with each other at work and play demonstrate that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The highly attractive displays in every classroom provide a stimulating learning environment for the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants build on this through good teamwork, good subject knowledge, thorough planning and their excellent rapport with the pupils. Lessons are well organised and teachers seek to engage the pupils' attention through a good variety of activities and collaborative work, to which the pupils respond well. Occasionally, the pace during the introductory part of the lesson is not rapid enough, with the result that pupils' attention wanders and progress slackens. Some activities are not challenging enough, especially for the more able pupils. However, good attention is given to the needs of different ability groups, and teaching assistants provide helpful support for many pupils, which helps them to maintain good progress. Individual targets are set and changed regularly for each pupil for literacy and numeracy. These help pupils to focus on important areas for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff are successfully putting a lot of creativity into their planning of the curriculum and constantly seek new ways to motivate and interest the pupils, such as the drama and philosophy project which has had the knock-on effect of improving pupils' self-confidence and their performance in English and mathematics in Year 3. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length or to develop and consolidate their writing skills across the curriculum. Good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as well as a wide variety of trips and visits contribute well to pupils' personal development. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available for all pupils contributes to their enjoyment of school, whilst additional sessions for English, mathematics and science through breakfast clubs help boost the performance of identified groups of pupils. There is good provision to help pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and safe practices.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school tracks the progress of all pupils carefully and goes to great lengths to identify individual needs and provide additional support when this is required. Good links with external agencies and input from the school's learning mentor ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are met well. Because of the high quality of pastoral care, the school has successfully transformed the behaviour and attitudes of a small number of pupils who have been disaffected with school or had significant behavioural difficulties. The home-school liaison officer ensures that good relationships are maintained with parents and that an increasing number of parents become more involved in their children's education. Arrangements for health and safety, child protection, the promotion of racial equality and the safe recruitment of staff are all robust. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and know they can talk to them about problems. Academic guidance through the marking of pupils' work is weak. Pupils are given little indication of where they have made mistakes or what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leaders have managed the amalgamation of two very different schools extremely well under challenging circumstances. This has culminated in the recent seamless transition into a new school building where staff and pupils are working together very effectively. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher sets the tone and vision for the school and provides a very strong sense of direction which results in positive and shared responsibility amongst all staff for pupils' progress. Very good opportunities for staff to further their professional development and their commitment to providing positive learning experiences for the pupils enable them to contribute effectively to school improvement. Challenging targets have been set and pupils' standards and progress are monitored carefully to identify where extra support is needed. The school's self-evaluation is thorough. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths, and effective action has been taken to remedy identified weaknesses. However, monitoring is not always rigorous enough in identifying weaknesses, such as in the quality of marking and pupils' presentation of work in their books. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, and the careful deployment of staff enables full participation and good progress of all pupils. Resources are used well to support pupils' learning and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Governors are well informed and very supportive. They show a strong commitment to the work of the school and ask challenging questions to promote further improvements. The excellent management of the amalgamation, the gradual improvement in standards and the effective action taken to improve standards in reading and mathematics indicate that the school has good capacity for further 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?	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	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

12 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clarice Cliff Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 3DP

My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel welcome and taking the time to talk to us. We liked your new school building and thought the displays in all of your classrooms were excellent. You go to a good school. These were the main findings of the inspection.

- You are making good progress in your work and you reach standards that are similar to those of children in most schools.
- You are developing into well-behaved, responsible young people.
- You receive good teaching and there is good support for those of you who are struggling with your work.
- The teachers work hard to make your lessons creative and interesting and they provide a good range of activities for you outside lessons.
- The school takes good care of you and ensures that you understand what you have to do to lead healthy lives and keep yourselves safe.
- The school is led and managed well and staff are working together well to bring even further improvements to the school.
- The headteacher and staff managed the amalgamation of your two previous schools and the move into your new building exceptionally well.

We felt that the quality of your writing and the way you present your work could be improved. Therefore, we have asked the headteacher and staff to provide you with more opportunities to practise your writing and to help you to improve by showing you more often where you make mistakes and what you need to do to become better writers.

We hope that you will continue to work well with each other and with your teachers and that you will all try to improve your writing and take greater care over the way you present your work.

We wish you all every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Sims Lead inspector