

Ball Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124020
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314781
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	205
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	57
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Dawson
Headteacher	Sharon May
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whitfield Road Ball Green Stoke-on-Trent ST6 8AJ
Telephone number	01782 234811
Fax number	01782 234815

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Inspection number	314781

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) and serves an area of challenging social circumstances. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is a breakfast club and after school club on site that are not managed by the governing body and so are not commented upon in the report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving. It provides pupils with a stimulating and caring environment in which to learn. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are particularly appreciative of recent changes. One parental comment was typical of many: 'I am very impressed in how the school has turned about. It is a very friendly school and both my children are happy there.'

The dynamic and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has been central to the school's recent improvement. She has introduced a variety of rigorous strategies that have reversed a trend of declining standards since the last inspection. This is evident in the fact that teaching and learning, pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance have all improved considerably. She provides focused educational direction and a very clear vision for school improvement. All those involved in school life share this vision and a strong team ethos is evident. Senior leaders support her well and ensure effective monitoring of the school's performance. This leads to decisive action to bring about improvement in those areas identified; for instance, pupils now have good opportunities to be involved in practical scientific investigations and, as a result, standards in science have improved significantly. However, this has not been the case for standards in mathematics which remain low because the school lacks a consistent approach to teaching calculation skills.

Pupils attain standards, by the end of Year 6, that are below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. However, this represents satisfactory achievement from their poor skills on starting school. Pupils' achievement has improved well over the last two years. They make satisfactory progress overall but this is inconsistent because it slows down in Years 3 and 4. This is because the work set for pupils in these classes does not always effectively challenge them and so they do not achieve to their full capability. This is particularly the case for more able pupils.

Pupils behave well and are polite and considerate to others because their personal development is good. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and their attendance rate has improved significantly because of the robust action taken by leaders. This has had a positive effect on the progress of those pupils who previously did not attend school regularly. Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and say they enjoy lessons. Teachers use questioning well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, which is important as these are well below the levels expected when they start school. Relationships are good and lead to classrooms being calm and friendly places in which to learn.

A wide range of enrichment activities effectively extends the satisfactory curriculum. These include extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest. The care and support of pupils is good and much appreciated by parents. All staff are fully committed to ensuring the health and well-being of all pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory and improving. Children start school with skill levels that are well below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress across most areas of learning. Though standards are mainly below average on entry to Year 1 and are well below in language and mathematical development, this represents satisfactory achievement. Children make good

progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the strong emphasis placed on this aspect of their learning. As a result, children behave well and work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. Satisfactory teaching focuses appropriately on encouraging children to make choices for themselves, which has a beneficial effect on their development as independent learners. Occasionally, these independent activities lack sufficient structure and do not provide suitable challenge for children of different abilities. The quality of care is good, so that children feel happy and safe, trusting the adults who look after them. Good leadership and management have overseen a range of improvements over the last 18 months. These include the creation of a more stimulating internal learning environment, much better tracking of children's progress and more effective teamwork amongst staff. These improvements have not had time to have had full impact on raising standards but progress is improving. The outside area is not used effectively to develop children's learning throughout the day. The good liaison with parents and pre-school providers enables children to settle in quickly when they first start in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a whole school approach to the teaching of calculation in Years 1 to 6 is introduced to raise pupils' standards in mathematics.
- Ensure all pupils' learning, especially that of the more able, is always effectively challenged so their rate of progress improves more quickly in all subjects.
- Develop the use of the outdoor area for children in the EYFS to better support their learning throughout the day.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall as they pass through the school. The main reason that progress is satisfactory rather than good is that pupils are not consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging in some classes. Standards at the end of Year 2 are still low but improving because of better quality teaching and learning, especially in Year 2. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress but this slows in Years 3 and 4, so by the time they leave their levels of attainment are still low, particularly in mathematics. Pupils' calculation skills are a weak aspect of their performance in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall because of the extra support they receive in class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and relate well to each other and to adults, as their spiritual, social and moral development is good. They enjoy their activities in school and show interest in the views and ideas of others. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, such as by being a member of the school council, and in so doing, make a positive contribution to the school community. They also make a good contribution to the local community, as is seen in their involvement in designing mosaic tiles as part of a project to regenerate the local area. Although this reflects good knowledge of their own culture, their awareness of those from differing backgrounds is limited. They are adopting healthy lifestyles well, as is shown in their good understanding of

the need to eat healthy foods and take regular exercise. They also have a good awareness of how to stay safe. This is evident in the responsible way they move in and around school and in their careful handling of equipment. Although their skills levels could be higher they are prepared in a satisfactory way for the next stage of their education because of their good personal and social development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and so are able to explain new ideas in a confident manner. They provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs and small groups. This has a positive effect on developing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers plan lessons carefully to build upon previous learning but are not always effective in providing work that stretches pupils of different abilities. Consequently, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case in some year groups. Marking is generally used well to guide pupils to improve their performance. Pupils are keen to learn and show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their activities. They collaborate well and are willing to help others when they come across difficulties. Teaching assistants are deployed well to provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The wide range of extra-curricular activities extends the curriculum well. These include gymnastics, music, gardening and arts and craft clubs. Residential visits to outdoor pursuit centres in Years 4, 5 and 6 develop pupils' confidence and encourage team building. The school has good links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches, to widen pupils' experiences and develop their skills in a variety of areas. The curriculum is currently being adapted to provide more effective links between subjects to enable pupils to use skills learned in one subject to support learning in others. Planning in mathematics does not promote a consistent approach to teaching calculation skills throughout the school. Planning for the use of the outdoor area in the EYFS is not effective in supporting children's development across all areas of learning. The programme for personal development is good and makes a significant contribution to the good progress they make in this aspect of their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and secure in school and as one pupil commented, 'This is a warm, caring and sensitive place in which to learn and play.' Child protection arrangements are rigorous, with all staff knowing the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Risk assessments are firmly in place for activities both in and around school and off site. There are good links with outside agencies to ensure extra support for individual pupils when required. The systems for checking the progress that individual pupils make have been improved and are now comprehensive. They enable the school to have a clear picture of progress throughout the school. However, some teachers do not always use this information effectively to set pupils

activities to improve their performance. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Self-evaluation is accurate and enables the correct areas for improvement to be prioritised. For instance, leaders have identified the need to develop a consistent approach to the teaching of calculation skills to raise standards in mathematics. There are good links between individual staff professional development needs and whole school priorities. Leaders work well with others to bring about improvement. This is exemplified in the close liaison with the local authority over the last two years that has seen a marked improvement in standards in English and science. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their role and not yet fully involved in school improvement. Leaders promote community cohesion well. Governors are very supportive of the school and actively involved in helping it improve as they keep a close eye on day-to-day school activities. The school's recent track record shows it has good capacity to make any necessary further changes.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

13 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ball Green Primary School, Stoke-on Trent, ST6 8AJ

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving. Your progress, although satisfactory, means you could improve on the below average standards you reach in English and science and the well below average standards in mathematics. This shows you have made satisfactory progress from your low skill levels on starting school.

What we found about your school.

- It is a very friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- You behave well and are keen to learn.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe, both in and around school and on visits.
- You enjoy coming to school and are kind and considerate to others.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles well and show a good awareness of how to stay safe.
- The curriculum is made interesting by the after school clubs and a wide range of visits and visitors.
- You make a good contribution to the school community, such as by being a member of the school council.
- The people who lead the school are working hard to make further improvements and help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Teach calculation skills more consistently throughout the school, to help you reach higher standards in mathematics.
- Make sure you are always given work that makes you think hard so your progress improves in all subjects.
- Develop the use of the outdoor area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes, to better support their learning throughout the day.

You can all help your school by always trying your best in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector