

# Grove Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124032
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	314786
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lois Furness

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	348
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pauline Tee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola McIntyre
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Turner Street Northwood Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234550
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 236404

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

In this larger than average primary school the vast majority of pupils are of White British background. The attainment of most pupils on entry to Year 3 is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The percentage of pupils whose first language is other than English is also above average, but all speak sufficient English to be able to access the curriculum independently. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007. Since then five members of staff have left and a deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. However, the pace of improvement is accelerating rapidly under the headteacher's clear direction and the increasingly effective work of the new senior management team. Staff are pulling together well, fully determined to move the school forward and eradicate past underachievement. Although most parents are pleased with the school's work, a minority of parents are concerned about the many changes occurring and instability in staffing. However, staffing issues have been resolved and a more stable staffing structure established. The school knows that it must improve communication with parents so all fully understand how recent changes are helping their children to learn more effectively and attain higher standards.

Pupils are currently leaving at the end of Year 6 with average standards in English, mathematics and science. This shows improvement from the below average standards attained over the last three years, and represents satisfactory achievement, from when pupils start at school in Year 3 with broadly average standards. Writing standards, however, are lower than those of reading, and pupils do not use sufficiently interesting and adventurous vocabulary confidently in their written work. Also, pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.

Staff are responding well to the outcomes of the rigorous checks made on teaching and learning and, although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is an increasing proportion of good lessons. Relationships are good, and almost all pupils behave well. Teachers use effective strategies to involve pupils in their learning. Pupils know how to improve their work and say, for example, 'Targets are useful, they help you to get better in English and maths.' The proportion of good teaching is still not sufficient to ensure that all pupils make good progress. This is because teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly the more able, are not high enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make the same satisfactory progress as their classmates.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well. They enjoy taking responsibility and are enthusiastic about their roles, as school councillors, for example. They eagerly explained how they planned and organised activities such as the 'G factor' fund-raising event and the summer ball for the Year 6 leavers. Pupils' good personal development reflects the good levels of care, guidance and support provided by the staff. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and are appreciative of the new after-school clubs that enable them to take part in sporting activities. The curriculum is satisfactory and a satisfactory range of visits and visitors to the school are making the curriculum more interesting.

The school knows what it does well and what it needs to do to improve. It knows its strengths and areas for improvement, and it is tackling its weaknesses in the right order. However, this drive is mainly by senior leaders and middle leadership is not as involved in influencing change. Subject leaders are new to their responsibilities and have not had time to develop their monitoring and evaluating role. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and there is sound capacity to make the necessary further improvements.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly the breadth of pupils' vocabulary, and increase opportunities for them to write in subjects other than English.
- Increase the amount of good teaching and, in particular, raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, especially the more able.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation role of subject leaders.
- Ensure parents understand the reasons for change and the positive effect these changes will have on their children's progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

In the past, standards have been below average. Teaching has not been good enough to rectify underachievement and to build effectively on pupils' broadly average attainment on entry to the school. However, as a result of more rigorous assessment procedures, and the senior leadership's strong determination to improve pupils' progress, teachers are planning work that meets the needs of pupils more effectively. Therefore, standards are now broadly average in English, mathematics and science, and achievement is satisfactory. Although progress is improving, more able pupils could do more as the activities given to them do not consistently challenge them. Pupils' reading skills are stronger than their speaking and writing skills and the school knows that standards should be higher in these aspects of English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, and sometimes good progress, as the work they are given is becoming more accurate in meeting their learning needs.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school, saying, for example, 'This school is great.' They enjoy learning and attendance is broadly average. Behaviour is good. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour, for example, by contacting their parents themselves, informing them of their positive or negative actions. Pupils know how to keep safe and feel safe in school. They know who to approach with a problem and are confident issues of concern will be dealt with appropriately. Most pupils make healthy choices and are keen to participate in sporting activities. However, a minority of parents do not support the school's work on promoting a healthy lifestyle, and lunch boxes sometimes contain unhealthy options. Pupils are keen to take part in school activities and make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council. For example, school councillors took an active role in planning and organising the very successful fund-raising 'G factor' event. Pupils' standards in basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

There are good relationships at all levels with mutual respect between adults and pupils. Strategies to involve pupils in their learning are good. Writing on small whiteboards and regular opportunities to discuss ideas enable all pupils to contribute to lessons. However, these opportunities to talk to each other are not effective enough in enabling pupils to extend their use of vocabulary to make their writing more interesting. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. A consistency of approach helps pupils to behave well, and this has a particularly positive effect on the small minority of pupils who sometimes have difficulty in controlling themselves. Because of these factors, classrooms are calm places in which to learn, and this makes a positive contribution to the progress that pupils make. However, progress is inconsistent because teachers do not always provide work that effectively challenges all pupils, especially the more able.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and appropriately balanced and is becoming more closely matched to the range of pupils' needs. There is a good personal development programme that successfully promotes pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and personal relationships. There is good emphasis on literacy and numeracy but not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop and consolidate their writing skills across the curriculum. Enrichment activities are satisfactory and a sound range of visits and visitors to the school are making the curriculum more interesting. Parents and pupils are pleased with the recently introduced after-school clubs such as gardening and football. Pupils say, 'It is getting much better now as there are lots more things to do after school.'

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pastoral care is good. Pupils feel safe and the majority of parents are confident that their children are looked after well. Procedures for health and safety, risk assessments and child protection are secure. Recent strategies to improve pupils' behaviour have been effective, contributing well to their good personal development and improving their learning. The school provides good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. There are good links with outside agencies, who provide additional support where necessary.

Good procedures are now in place to assess and monitor pupils' academic progress, although these are not yet fully embedded. Pupils are aware of their learning targets and this is enabling them to take more responsibility for their progress. The marking of pupils' work is good in providing praise for successful effort and sets out areas for improvement. Pupils understand the new process and say they find it really helpful. However, they do not always have time to respond to the useful comments made and this limits the impact of the feedback given.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior managers have a clear vision of where they want the school to be, and how to get there. Since her appointment, much of the responsibility for bringing about improvement had been centered on the headteacher but this has now changed. The newly established senior leadership team work together very well and has proved successful in prioritising areas for development and putting initiatives into place to bring about improvement, as seen, for example, in the increasing proportion of good teaching. Middle leadership is in the early stages of development. Enthusiastic staff with responsibility for English, mathematics and science have been appointed. However, these appointments are recent, and subject leaders have not had time to fully develop their monitoring and evaluation role. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive but they are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring and strategic development of the school. The headteacher has been effective in sharing her vision with staff and governors. She has not, however, been as successful in involving a minority of parents by explaining the reasons why change has been necessary, and how this is improving provision for their children.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

30 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Grove Junior School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 2NL

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed speaking with so many of you and visiting all your classrooms. We found that your school is satisfactory. That means it does some things well and there are other things it needs to do better. The school knows this, it is working very hard to get better and, as a result, it is improving fast.

By the time you leave school in Year 6, most of you are attaining standards in your work that are similar to those attained by children in other schools across the country. This means you have made satisfactory progress. You clearly enjoy school and try hard with your work. It is good that you know the importance of eating healthily and taking lots of exercise. You told us that you feel safe and adults will always help you. We think the way you talk to each other to share ideas is good, and we agree with you when you say you find targets useful to help you get even better. We were impressed by your good behaviour, and the way the school councillors are doing such a good job. The 'G factor' event looked really good fun. I know we all wish we could have come to watch your wonderful performances!

We think your headteacher and other senior members of staff are working hard to help teachers to plan work that helps you learn faster. However, we have asked that your teachers make sure the work they set makes you all think really hard. We have asked that you get lots of opportunities to practise your writing skills, and teachers help you to use exciting words in your writing to make it more interesting to read. At the moment, the senior managers in your school have a very good idea of the things the school does well and those things that need to improve. So we have asked that those teachers responsible for different subjects are now given the time to make things better for you as well. We know there have been lots of changes over the past year and some of your parents are not sure why things are now different. Therefore, we have asked your headteacher to make sure that all your parents know exactly why things are changing.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful. Remember, you can help to make your school even better by continuing to work hard and to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness Lead inspector



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