

Hazel Slade Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124069
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314795
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	115
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Morgan
Headteacher	Simon Norton
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Cannock Wood Street Hazel Slade Cannock WS12 5PN
Telephone number	01543 512215
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils who attend the school come from the nearby local housing estate, an area of mixed owner-occupied and rented accommodation. The eligibility for free school meals is quite high. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds, with a very small number from Black minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulty and/or disabilities and those with statements is above that typically found in primary schools.

There have been significant changes since the last inspection, with the school moving to one form entry from two. It is now providing for half the number of pupils it once did. Staff turnover has been high, with temporary cover currently in place in two out of five classes. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

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 is a calm, happy and purposeful place of learning whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with emerging strengths. Governors and senior leaders have kept the school on an even keel, despite the turbulence in staffing and significant reduction in pupil numbers. The new headteacher has set out a clear agenda for taking the school forward. He has made a positive start to his role. The impact is already showing on the quality of education provided. This is due to the rapidly developing partnership with parents. In addition, widening links with local schools and working with the local authority and other external agencies are extending the resources available for pupils.

Senior leaders have built an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses, with the right priorities identified in the school's well-conceived improvement plan. The school recognises that stronger leadership is required to help drive improvements in mathematics. Teamwork is a strength. Good morale is being shown in the way that staff are embracing new challenges and opportunities, and through their united determination to ensure that all pupils enjoy achieving to the full. Governors are keeping a close watching eye on the budget and are rigorously applying best value principles to key decisions about the school's future. Because of these features, it is clear that the school has secure capacity to build for future improvement.

Standards in the 2007 national tests for seven and 11 year olds were broadly average. The achievement of all pupils in English was good, and satisfactory in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, achieved as well as their peers nationally. However, fewer pupils than expected reached the higher level, particularly in mathematics. The school has been working to close the gap between English and mathematics with good impact, as is shown by the well-targeted mathematics intervention programmes for vulnerable pupils in danger of falling behind. However, there is still some way to go to drive forward planned improvements in mathematics and, in particular, to ensure that more able pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Academic guidance usefully draws on the staff's knowledge of the pupils and includes the setting of suitable year group targets by school leaders to raise expectations. The further setting of class learning targets in numeracy helps pupils to focus on what they must, should or could try to aim for in lessons. However, there is inconsistent use of these targets to inform pupils' next steps in learning or to involve them in reviewing how well they are doing. Additionally, teachers' marking seldom draws on targets to support pupils in improving their progress, though there is emerging good practice in marking in the Foundation Stage on which to build.

Children make good progress in the early years because they are taught well and learn from an exciting 'hands-on' curriculum. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall in the rest of the school. However, particularly effective teaching results in pupils making good progress in Year 6, especially in English. Where teaching is not as good, it is because of the lack of pace and challenge to motivate more able pupils to achieve as much as possible. On a few occasions, the work is not well matched to the pupils' different abilities, resulting in some pupils finding it too easy. A sample of work seen in pupils' books confirms this picture. The good curriculum has helped many pupils to become interested learners, to see themselves as achievers, to build good self-esteem, to make confident progress in improving their behaviour and to develop a 'can-do' attitude. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Staff know the pupils really well and are responsive to pupils' personal needs. This knowledge,

together with robust arrangements for safeguarding and very positive relationships, assists pupils in feeling well-cared for and secure. Parents are in strong agreement about the qualities of the school and identify how well their children's skills and talents are fostered. In the words of one parent, 'Hazel Slade is a school that listens to the children and urges parent participation. It is just a great school with real community spirit'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Pupils make a positive start to school because of good quality induction arrangements that include parents 'stay and play' and a 'buddy system' of older pupils looking after the new starters. Pupils make good progress from a below average starting point because teaching is effective and staff are responsive to individual needs. The pupils are taught letter sounds on a daily basis and learn to recognise letters, read familiar words and write for both purpose and pleasure. They also benefit from a wide range of practical tasks that promote their confidence well and desire to 'have a go' at new experiences, for example when sewing fabric and showing great patience when their needle requires re-threading! They access materials for themselves in the various 'zones' and are sensible in their choices. The super quality outdoor play area has been improved significantly since the last inspection and assists pupils in both their physical and creative development. A revised assessment tracker has been introduced by the new Foundation Stage leader, with outcomes logged directly onto the pupil's e-profiles and, as such, is accessible to all staff. The tracker has the potential to be a very useful tool to chart progress. However, there is recognition that further work is required in moderating assessments to ensure that an accurate picture is established on which future progress can be measured and targets set.

What the school should do to improve further

- establish clear leadership in mathematics to drive forward improvement at the pace required
- raise teachers' expectations and increase the pace of work and challenge in the activities set for the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that their standards are lifted
- make better use of target setting in mathematics to inform pupils' next steps in learning and to involve them in evaluating how well they are doing
- review approaches to marking, draw on the pockets of best practice to identify and target improvement as well as encouraging good 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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory, with pupils reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Children in Reception make good progress and this reflects the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils make steady progress during Years 1 and 2 to reach broadly average standards. Reading standards last year were weaker than in writing and mathematics. A good range of strategies to improve pupils' reading skills and habits has proved beneficial, including daily letter sound sessions, an hour of guided reading, new reading books to take home and lots of 'talking partner' work.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory in Years 3 to 5. It is good in Year 6, due to consistently good teaching and stability in staffing. Good leadership in English and strong promotion of literacy across the curriculum are supporting better teaching and improving progress. However, challenge and expectation are not consistently high in all years in mathematics. As a result, some groups of pupils achieve better than others. Suitable year group targets have been set to raise staff awareness about the level of progress expected of all pupils. Tracking shows a mixed picture in progress towards the targets in which the school is addressing via a good range of intervention strategies and close monitoring. The use of targets is not yet sufficiently rigorous to assist the raising of standards, particularly for the more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave sensibly, enjoy working and playing together, are cooperative and enjoy attending school. Pupils are open about their feelings and experiences and use the class 'worry boxes' when issues arise. They identify that although bullying sometimes takes place, instances are rare and always dealt with swiftly. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure at school. Pupils are given a range of responsibilities such as house captains, prefects, monitors and play-pals and carry these out diligently. The School Council enables pupils to learn how to represent the views of others and contribute to decision-making within school. High priority is placed on building basic skills, with the good promotion of literacy in themed topic work supporting pupils' good speaking and writing skills development. Pupils' numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are satisfactory but the more limited opportunities for extending these results is satisfactory, rather than good and in preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There has been good impact from the work done by school leaders to sustain the quality of teaching and learning during a time of significant staff changes. Effective induction arrangements for newly-qualified teachers and those working in school on a temporary basis in Years 3 to 5 have enabled them to pick up the reins in a new class with confidence. All teachers manage behaviour very positively so that classes are happy and purposeful places of learning. Lessons are well planned and organised and engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. However, expectations are not always sufficiently high to ensure all pupils make maximum gains in their learning, especially in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn successfully because they receive effective support. Carefully chosen resources help pupils with visual impairment to have full access to all activities. However, sometimes the pace of work is too slow and the work insufficiently challenging for more able pupils. The teaching of English, particularly writing, is better because of shared consistent approaches and the close attention paid to assessing progress. There is limited use of next step targets in marking to support progress and aid pupil self-review in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a very positive impact on all pupils' personal skills development. Through well-planned topics, good cross-curricular links are made between subjects such as English,

mathematics, science, ICT, art, design, geography and personal, social, health and citizenship education in the current Year 6 focus on keeping healthy, entitled Blood and Guts. Parents are provided with 'mind maps' that show them what their children are learning each term and how they can help. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given activities that help them make steady progress. In contrast, more able pupils are sometimes provided with tasks that stretch them to the full, such as when 'completing a maths mission' in Year 6, but practice is not consistent. Pupils find the curriculum exciting, especially the creative aspects and, in particular, theatre visits and residential holiday activities. The involvement of parents in a Greek Day and over 50 grandparents in Grandparents' Day further enriches the experiences for the pupils. Strong and developing links with the local authority, local businesses, community groups and local schools are adding extra value to the resources available to the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a caring community where pupils feel safe, gain enjoyment from personal success and benefit from the very good relationships with teachers and one another. Weekly assemblies 'spotlight' the work of those who go out of their way to care for others. Pupils know whom to go to if they have any worries and say that one of the best things about school is having so many friends! Procedures to ensure their health and safety are rigorous, with regular safeguarding audits made, including staff vetting and child protection to keep everything up to date. There are good working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support vulnerable groups. For example, the education welfare service has helped the school to reduce absences and improve attendance. Academic guidance to help pupils improve their work is developing, and is currently satisfactory. Targets for improvement and a 'traffic light' system for tracking progress are in place but these are not used consistently or effectively enough in mathematics. As a result, although there are good features, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recently-appointed headteacher is providing a very clear vision and is passionate about improving the school. He has gained the respect of staff, governors, pupils and parents in his one term of tenure and has already made some changes for the better, such as tracking progress more rigorously and targeting intervention where required. The remit of the senior leadership team has been reviewed, with a range of roles being developed that are linked directly to driving forward the school improvement agenda. Following the departure of the previous postholder, the role of mathematics subject leader has not yet been allocated and, although this is difficult due to the temporary staffing situation and extended role of senior staff, it is a weakness that is holding back progress in the subject. Systems for monitoring teaching are in place and there is a strong team spirit that is having a positive effect on moving the school forward and improving learning. Governors provide good critical support to the school. Under the astute and committed leadership of the chair, the governing body is managing the budget carefully and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently.

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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?	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 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	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 the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazel Slade Primary School, Cannock WS12 5PN

I am writing to say thank you to everyone for your very friendly welcome when the inspectors came to visit you on Wednesday. We really enjoyed chatting with the School Council about their role and listening to their ideas for supporting the future improvement of the school. While we were with you, we found out quite a lot about your school and below are some of the key things we want you to know about

- your school is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education
- the youngest learners get off to really good start in Reception, with their Year 1 buddies playing a big role in helping them settle so well
- you are taught soundly and make satisfactory progress, and sometimes you do better than this, particularly in Year 6 and in English because you are given work that is both interesting and challenging
- some of you are benefiting from extra help in English and mathematics and are working hard to catch up in your work
- most of you enjoy school, behave really sensibly and look out for one another
- you contribute well to your school and make very sensible choices that are helping you be healthy and keep safe
- the good curriculum is helping you to become interested learners and develop a 'can-do' attitude
- adults in school look after you well and you told us that there is always someone to turn to if you have a worry
- the school is led satisfactorily by your new headteacher, the staff get on well as a team and together are working to a good plan for making the school even better.

Here are the things that we think are top priority for the staff

- make the leadership of mathematics better so that you can benefit from the same kind of improvement you have in English
- improve the level of your work and the challenge in the activities set, especially for the brightest mathematicians so that they achieve more
- help you know your targets in mathematics and use them to check how well you are doing
- ask teachers to use marking to not only encourage your good progress but also to identify how you can do even better.

On behalf of the team of inspectors, I would like to wish you great success for the future.

Christine Field Lead Inspector