

Springhead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124097
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314806
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Rhodes
Headteacher	Brian Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Kingsley Road Talke Pits Stoke-on-Trent ST7 1RA
Telephone number	01782 296835
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • how well the school has improved pupils' writing, especially at Key Stage 1, and accelerated the progress of more able pupils throughout the school • whether the ways in which teachers assess and guide pupils' learning, including through their marking, helps pupils understand how to improve their own work • how well the school's leaders and managers know and use what children learn in their Reception Year to improve their learning from Year 1 onwards • how well the school develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of the range and diversity of cultures in Britain today. Evidence was gathered from observations, from looking at pupils' work, from discussions with staff, governors and pupils, from parents' questionnaires, and from documentation provided by the school. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

Children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average although it fluctuates from year to year and is well above average in the current Year 6. The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are at the early stages of learning English. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark, an Artsmark and a Healthy Schools Award. It is part of a local authority pilot scheme aimed at achieving an award for its provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The vast majority of parents hold it in high regard. They say the school offers 'all pupils lots of opportunities to do well', that it is 'constantly striving to maintain high standards', and that the headteacher and deputy headteacher 'inspire confidence that helps everyone pull together to give children the best'.

Pupils very much enjoy school. They trust the staff and are confident that they will always receive help, should they need it. They appreciate having 'worry boxes' where they can report any concerns anonymously, and say the teachers follow up all concerns raised. They also say the teachers are the best thing about the school because they are 'kind and friendly' but give them 'hard work to do' and show them how to improve it. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. They state confidently that any untoward incidents are swiftly and properly dealt with, explaining that 'there isn't really any bullying in this school, only some misunderstandings sometimes'. Pupils contribute well to the school community through, for example, their work as school councillors and play leaders. They also contribute well to the local and wider community through their work in the arts and through raising money for various charities.

All teachers understand their collective responsibility for ensuring pupils do as well as they possibly can in all year groups. This starts with the effective provision and good progress seen in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the school, the teachers' unmistakable sense of purpose and their desire to accelerate pupils' progress emanates from the clear direction that comes from the headteacher and senior leaders. The checks they make on teaching and learning are robust, providing good guidance for teachers on how to improve their teaching, and teachers respond well. The very strong teamwork thus engendered has successfully improved pupils' achievement in recent years. This resulted in an above average proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science in 2007. The progress those pupils made was significantly better than expected. Currently, standards are average in Year 6 in all three subjects and achievement is good throughout the school. In Key Stage 1, although standards are still below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, they are now close to it. This represents good progress in Years 1 and 2.

The school is successfully improving the challenge for more able pupils. This, and the introduction of two levels of targets, 'realistic' and 'aspirational', has been the driving force in the more recent improvements, especially in writing. All teachers are aiming for the aspirational targets. They assess pupils' learning well and give them clear guidance on how to improve. However, they often miss opportunities to focus pupils on their writing targets when writing occurs in different subjects. Older pupils know how to assess their own and others' learning and the school has a clear timescale for extending this good practice to other year groups. This is a school that knows itself well and approaches change in a measured way. Its own evaluation of its effectiveness is entirely accurate and it is wholly focused on accelerating learning throughout the school. All of this gives it a good capacity for further improvement.

The well planned curriculum promotes pupils' learning and personal development, including their health and safety, effectively. It links different subjects together well in topics. Where appropriate, elements of other subjects are covered in literacy lessons, and literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are consolidated and extended in topic work. Particularly good examples of this were evident, for example, in imaginative history

and literacy work where pupils in different classes compared life at different times in the past with their own lives today. Improvements in the resources for ICT have led to good improvement in that subject since the previous inspection. Pupils were observed using computers as a natural tool for learning in all lessons. Their work includes many examples of their well developed ICT skills.

Teachers teach in many different ways, taking good account of pupils' different learning styles. They use role play extensively, successfully improving pupils' confidence and their speaking and listening skills, and extending the range of vocabulary they need to write well. This adds to the pupils' enjoyment of learning, which is evident in their good behaviour and attendance and their positive attitudes in class. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Large numbers participate in the extensive range of sporting activities available. Younger pupils stated proudly that there was a football club just for them and that 'everybody could join in'. The school's good links with other schools and external agencies contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils leave the school well prepared for their future.

Specialist teaching, instrumental tuition and a good range of art, music and drama clubs and activities further enrich and extend the curriculum. Many visits and visitors, some of which involve representatives from different faiths and cultures, successfully extend pupils' learning and personal development. The school promotes race equality satisfactorily. However, while pupils have a basic understanding of different religions, their knowledge of the range of cultures in British society today is relatively limited. The school knows this and plans to improve it are given priority in next year's development plan. Governors know the school well. Through the reports they receive from subject leaders, and their visits to classrooms to look at the subjects for which they are responsible, they keep a close eye on how well pupils, and the school as a whole, are doing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in each area of learning but few reach the nationally expected early learning goals in all six of them. However, early writing and number skills are taught well in this age group, and last year, children reached the standards expected nationally in those aspects of literacy and numeracy. They are on course to do so again this year.

The curriculum promotes literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional skills well in all activities. This was very evident in the work the children were doing on Chinese New Year, where they learned to play eastern music, construct menus and cook and serve simple Chinese food. They entered wholeheartedly into the role play involved, showing good ability to share and take turns, and to listen to each other and the staff.

Adults know when to intervene and when to let children pursue learning for themselves. They assess and record children's progress well and use the information to determine what each needs to do next. The school has plans to develop the facilities in the outdoor learning area, including providing a shelter for all-weather use. At present, the outdoor area is not used to best advantage as an outdoor classroom for this age group, although it is used satisfactorily to promote children's physical skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the marking of pupils' writing in different subjects is as good as it is in literacy, and remind pupils that they can work towards their targets whenever they write.
- Improve pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in Britain today

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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?	2
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	2
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	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

8 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springhead Primary School, Talke Pits ST7 1RA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school and for talking to me about what you do there. You clearly enjoy school very much. You also care a great deal for each other, as I noticed when you were telling me all the things you do to keep yourselves and others fit and safe as well as healthy and happy in school. Your work as play leaders and school councillors contributes greatly to this and you are clearly very proud of your contribution to the school.

You and your parents and carers are right in thinking that you go to a good school where all of the staff care deeply for you and want you to do as well as you possibly can. Your good behaviour and very positive attitudes contribute greatly to the good progress you make throughout the school.

You said your teachers are the best thing about it and that they give you hard work to do, mark your work well and show you how to improve. They are certainly good at setting up exciting activities for you so that you can learn in lots of different ways and this is indeed helping you to learn faster. The school plan links different subjects together well, helping you to realise that what you have learned in one subject you can use in another. The people responsible for leading and managing your school keep a close eye on how well you are taught and how well you are doing. They are determined to help each of you do as well as you can. They work hard to encourage those who care for you at home to help you, too.

I have asked your school to focus on two things to help to speed up your learning and extend your personal development even further. These are:

- to get teachers to mark the writing you do in different subjects as well as they mark your writing in literacy, and to remind you that you can work towards your targets every time you write
- to improve your understanding of the different ways of life that exist in Britain today.

You can help your teachers by remembering your targets in all of your writing, and by finding out more about life in Britain beyond your own area. I hope you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now for the rest of your lives.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Additional inspector