

Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124102
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314809
Inspection date	17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Welsh
Headteacher	Catherine Henson
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Newcastle Road Madeley Heath Crewe CW3 9JX
Telephone number	01782 750313
Fax number	01782 750313

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. The number of pupils has risen in recent years, with a significant number of pupils joining the school at times other than the usual in the Reception Year. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but this varies between year groups, as does the balance of boys and girls. Children's attainment when they start in Reception also varies from one year to the next but is generally close to what is expected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good quality of education because it is well led, managed and governed. Good teaching ensures that pupils do well during their time at the school. The calm and happy environment reflects pupils' good relationships with each other and with the staff. Parents are very happy with the school. The view expressed by one that 'my child enjoys school and is nurtured and encouraged in the right way' is typical of many parents' comments. Pupils develop well into kind and thoughtful young people who are proud of their school and contribute extremely well to their community. They feel safe and secure because the school provides good pastoral care. Pupils like the wide range of activities provided outside lessons that enable them to take part in sports, broaden their interests and socialise with friends. The curriculum is tailored well to pupils' individual needs and enables them to learn about healthy lifestyles and keeping themselves safe. Planning to enable pupils to gain an understanding of different cultures is not as strong and so pupils' awareness of how these contribute to diversity in art, music and literature, for example, is weakened.

Good teaching ensures pupils' good progress. The good start made by children in Reception is maintained in subsequent years. This means that pupils of all abilities achieve well throughout the school, whatever their starting points, and reach above average standards by the time they leave. Pupils' progress is carefully checked. Any who are falling behind are well supported to catch up and those who can go further than most are spurred on by more challenging work. Teaching does not always allow pupils full reign to try out their ideas when investigating and solving problems and learn by their mistakes. This restricts pupils' attainment at times in science and mathematics. Pupils who join the school at later points quickly settle in because of the school's friendly atmosphere, and their good progress is ensured through effective teaching that takes account of their individual needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities get the help they need to succeed.

The headteacher sets the tone for a happy, caring and inclusive school community that supports its pupils well to reach challenging targets. A clear and accurate view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school is gained through good checks on its performance. The staff share their expertise to benefit pupils' learning. This has proved particularly successful in raising standards in writing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that children get a good start to their education and settle happily. Children join with levels of skills and knowledge that are broadly as expected. They make good progress because of good teaching that takes account of children's individual needs. Consequently, children learn at a good rate and standards are above average by the time they start in Year 1. The good range of interesting activities planned for children encourages them to develop curiosity and independence. As with other ages, the school recognises the need to boost children's understanding of other cultures.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils use their ideas to fully explore possibilities in solving problems and investigating in mathematics and science.
- Provide better opportunities for pupils to understand different cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There is good achievement by pupils in all parts of the school. Children's starting points vary considerably from year to year in Reception and the influx of pupils in later year groups means that the composition of year groups is variable. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points. Reception children make good progress and have achieved well by the time they start in Year 1. Pupils of all abilities continue to make good progress and achieve well in Years 1 and 2. The progress of the 2007 Year 6 pupils was better than that of previous years and results were well above average. Current assessments show that the overwhelming majority of pupils are maintaining this good pattern of progress, and standards are above average. Standards in writing have risen as a result of well focused teaching that enables pupils to reach challenging targets. However, pupils sometimes lack confidence and the opportunity to try out their ideas and learn from their mistakes in investigating and solving problems. This slows their development of key mathematical and scientific skills. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the additional support they receive from staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good attendance shows that they enjoy school. They are polite and thoroughly enjoy the company of their friends. Newcomers receive a warm welcome. Pupils are responsible and thoughtful and the school nurtures their good self-esteem. This starts in Reception, where the children develop the confidence to try new things, work happily together and take turns. Pupils willingly help each other and are well behaved. They take full advantage of the opportunities provided through the school council and house system to help their school and community. As one school council member put it when discussing the provision of playground equipment, 'It feels good when you've made a difference.' Good links with their community mean that pupils develop well socially and morally. They eagerly take part in a wide range of charitable work and performances in the locality, putting the school at the heart of its community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but their understanding about the diversity of cultures in modern Britain is not as strong. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and what is needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They know the value of exercise. They leave school well equipped for secondary school and future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and the positive relationships mean that pupils are eager to take part in lessons and do their best. Teaching throughout the school is enthusiastic and so pupils enjoy school right from the start in Reception, and show real interest and concentration in lessons. Teachers check pupils' progress carefully. Thorough, accurate assessments are used well to plan work that is matched to pupils' abilities in nearly all respects. Pupils' progress is slowed because teaching misses opportunities to allow pupils to try out their ideas when solving problems and investigating in science and mathematics. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well, in particular to encourage independent learning. Because

teachers explain the purpose of the lesson clearly, pupils know what they are learning. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support and so reach their individual targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils relish learning because of the practical nature of much of their work and the associated trips and visits. The Foundation Stage curriculum is particularly well planned to nurture children's independence in learning and foster their ideas. A good range of activities support the curriculum outside normal lessons and raises pupils' enjoyment of school. Links with local secondary schools, such as sports partnerships, extend the range of opportunities available. The oldest pupils have also taken part in a design and build project with the high school, for which they gained an award. Computers are used frequently and pupils are keen to use their ICT skills independently. The school has made good progress in improving pupils' writing skills and this is a strong feature in planning. However, curriculum plans give limited attention to the preparation of pupils for life in Britain as a multicultural society.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff take good care of the pupils. Pupils say that adults are good at helping them when they meet problems in their daily lives. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place. These factors combine to help pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils know the targets they have been set in their work. The excellent feedback from teachers about progress in reading and writing helps pupils know how well they are doing. The feedback given to pupils about their progress in mathematics is not quite as consistent. Pupils are regularly reminded about the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and staying safe. The school works closely with outside agencies and parents to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the level of support they need to achieve well. There are successful links with secondary schools to ensure pupils transfer smoothly and ICT connections enable Year 6 pupils to pose questions to Year 7 pupils about what to expect and how to overcome any problems.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's self-evaluation is good and provides a clear and accurate view of its relative strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher leads with energy and a clear vision of how to get the best for pupils in terms of their personal development and academic progress. She is well supported by a talented staff who cheerfully shoulder a wide range of responsibilities in this small school and carry them out effectively. There is a strong commitment to continuous school improvement and parents and pupils are widely consulted so that they can contribute. Findings are translated into effective planning for action. The right priorities are drawn from mainly good checks on what is happening. The programme for monitoring how well initiatives are working, such as those for improving pupils' investigative and problem solving skills, has faltered because of staff changes but is now back on track. The school's good capacity to improve is evident in the way in which it has worked successfully to raise standards in writing. The contribution made by governors is good. They are supportive and fully involved in the life of the school. Workshops on literacy and numeracy help parents to understand how to support their children's learning at home. The feedback from parents is very positive.

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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	2
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	1
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

18 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadows Primary School, Crewe CW3 9JX

Thank you all for being so welcoming when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you. We are writing to tell you what we found out while we were with you.

You go to a good school and do well in your work. This is because of good teaching.

You play a big part in making your school a happy place and are growing up as friendly, sensible young people, who care for each other and get on well. Your behaviour is good. Keep it up! We were pleased to see that you like helping each other as well as doing such a brilliant job of helping your community. We could see that you have a good understanding of how to stay fit, healthy and safe.

The staff look after you well and plan a good curriculum that keeps you interested in learning. It is good that so many of you take part in the extra activities.

Your school is well led and managed and the staff want the best for you. Everyone is working hard to make your school improve. We have asked the people in charge and your teachers to do these things:

- make sure that you have more chances to use your own ideas when you investigate and solve problems in mathematics and science
- make sure that you learn more about different cultures.

You can help by always trying your hardest. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane Lead inspector

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Barbara Crane
Lead inspector