

Green Lea First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124105
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314812
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	37
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eunice Finney
Headteacher	Jean Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mill Lane Milwich Stafford ST18 0EU
Telephone number	01889 505309
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress pupils currently in the school are making and how effective the systems for improving it are
- how far the school has got with establishing rigour in the way it assesses and tracks pupils' progress in lessons and over time
- the extent to which systems for checking teaching and learning lead to improvement, and how well the school promotes community cohesion
- provision and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, observing pupils at work and at play, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, analyses of the school's documentation, assessment information and responses to the parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a very small school serving a widespread rural community, with pupils coming from several small villages. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes, one covering Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2, and the other covering Years 3 and 4. All teaching staff and the majority of support staff are new since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in September 2007 following a period when the school went through considerable turmoil because it had been threatened with closure.

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 satisfactory. A range of factors led to a decline in provision and in pupils' progress after the previous inspection. The headteacher has tackled the issues systematically. Her good leadership and management, clarity of vision and the determined steps she has taken to improve teaching and learning are beginning to pay off. The well founded priorities in the school improvement plan arise out of the school's accurate evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. The criteria for checking how well the school is doing in relation to these priorities are not always as sharp as they might be, however. This is because they do not contain specific, quantifiable data against which improvements in pupils' progress can be measured. Nevertheless, the school knows where it is going and what it has to do to get there. This and the increasingly effective teamwork amongst the staff give it sound capacity for further improvement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's data and pupils' work show that pupils usually make better progress in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 1 and 2. This is because teaching is more focused in the older age groups, it matches the pupils' different ages and stages of learning better, and targets are more challenging. Pupils have individual targets for literacy but they are not always clear about how to reach them. Most of the targets are phrased as 'I can do ...' statements. However, some are phrased as 'I am beginning to ...' and are therefore too vague to help pupils see clearly or measure how well they are doing. Additionally, teachers' marking is not always as helpful as it might be in showing pupils the small steps they need to take to reach their targets. This is especially true in writing, including when it occurs in different subjects.

The school has successfully improved reading skills in all year groups, along with pupils' ability to understand the links between letters and sounds. This is helping pupils to write and spell better. By Year 4, they write confidently and at length, with accurate spelling and grammar, mindful of their audience. However, they do not always remember to use these skills when they write in subjects such as history and science. Teachers miss opportunities to promote writing through religious education because in this subject, pupils are too often expected to only have to draw pictures or stick them in their books and colour them. In its own evaluation, the school recognised that there was a need to improve pupils' ability to recall number facts rapidly. It introduced daily sessions which are helping to sharpen these skills and consequently improve pupils' progress in mathematics. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

Teachers manage pupils well. Their planning shows the objectives for each lesson, the objectives are shared with the pupils and activities keep pupils busy. However, what pupils are expected to learn within the activities is not always clear, and planning is rarely evaluated to show what individual children have achieved or what they need to do next. The headteacher is tackling this but not all staff are moving forward fast enough with it. The headteacher has also successfully introduced new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' learning. She meets with staff regularly to check how well each pupil is doing, and the systems are becoming increasingly embedded in the work of the school. Despite this, assessment information is not yet supporting planning for pupils' different ages and stages of learning well enough on a daily basis, especially in the younger age groups. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory.

The school takes good care of its pupils and it ensures they are adequately prepared for their future. Pupils enjoy school, as their good attendance shows. They behave well, feel valued and

are keen to make the school a better place. School councillors have been instrumental in helping to improve the playground and play facilities. Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and exercise regularly. It achieved the 'Activemark' in recognition of its work in physical education this year. A large proportion take part in the many sporting activities provided for them in and out of school. They know how to keep themselves safe and they report that bullying is very rare. Pupils have every confidence in the staff to help them with any concerns.

Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school. They see it as an important part of the local community, and describe it as a 'friendly' school where all staff are 'approachable and helpful'. They welcome the recent changes, saying they 'are for the better' and that 'every child matters' as an individual. The school's strong links with the local community give pupils a good understanding of their place in it and of how they can contribute to it. Through religious education, geography and history, pupils are gaining an understanding of different faiths and cultures. However, their awareness of different cultures in Britain today is underdeveloped. Governors understand the importance of promoting community cohesion but, having had to deal with many significant issues and changes in recent years, they have not yet decided how to do this systematically. It is part of the agenda planned for next term as the school reviews its currently satisfactory curriculum, which also includes the teaching of French, to make it more relevant to the pupils' needs. Governors are better informed about the school and more involved with it than at the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry is usually as expected for the children's ages. Children currently in Reception are making satisfactory progress and are on course to reach average standards in all areas of learning by the end of Reception. They are beginning to form letters and use punctuation correctly, and to find different ways of adding up to a given number, including with money. Good induction procedures, good partnerships with parents and a strong emphasis on personal, emotional and social development all ensure that children's welfare and well-being are promoted effectively. As a result, children are happy and settled, they behave well and they set about their tasks with enthusiasm. Parents praise the school highly for this.

The curriculum is satisfactory but the planning, and the activities that arise from it do not always have a clear enough focus on learning, and learning intentions are not always specific enough. When work is at the right level, children work hard and stay on task well, often with good assistance from support staff. At other times, when they move into groups or select their own activities, they revert to drawing or colouring in because they do not always receive enough adult guidance to move their learning on. Records of progress show what children do but not always how well, and rarely what they need to do next. Children have too few opportunities to engage in continuous learning indoors and out because they cannot move freely between the two areas. The outdoor area is sometimes used only as a reward for completing an indoor task and it is not sufficiently well organised as an extension of the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and provide a clearer focus on learning in all activities indoors and out.

- Ensure that: othe activities planned for pupils in Years 1 to 4 have clear learning outcomes based on assessment information oteachers mark pupils' work, especially their writing, consistently well in all subjects.
- Clarify the school's approach to promoting community cohesion and extend pupils' awareness of the range and diversity of cultures in Britain today.

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

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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?	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	3

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?	3
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?	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/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	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	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?	3

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Green Lea First School, Milwich, ST18 0EU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and for talking to us about what you do there. We found that your school is satisfactory. It is improving steadily because your headteacher is very clear about what needs to be done to help you make even better progress than you make now. She is helping all of the staff to put the right things in place to do this.

It is good to see that you enjoy school a lot and that you are really enthusiastic about your learning. You certainly have plenty of things to do to keep you busy. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they, and you, are very clear about what you are going to learn and how well you have done. We have also asked them to make sure that when they mark your work, they always show you how to improve it. This is especially true of your writing because you sometimes forget what you have learned in literacy when you write in other subjects, and your teachers do not always remind you about this.

You are right when you say the staff care for you a great deal and you are clearly very confident that they will always help you if you have any concerns. You know how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, and why it is important to do this. Your parents see the school as an important part of the local community. You learn successfully how to be part of that community and you do a great deal within the school that helps you to understand what 'community' means. You show this in your good behaviour and by caring for and respecting each other, adults and the school environment. We found, however, that you do not really know enough about the different cultures in Britain today. We have asked the governors to do something about this because it is an important part of helping you to face the wider world. We have also asked the school to make sure that when staff plan work for those of you who are in Reception, they are clear about what you are going to learn and that they give you the same opportunities to learn outside as you have inside.

You can help with all of this by listening carefully to your teachers, following their instructions and trying hard to do your best at all times. We hope you will enjoy learning for the rest of your lives as much as you enjoy school now.

Yours faithfully

Doris Bell Lead inspector