

Friarswood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124109
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314813
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Brooks
Headteacher	T Selby
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2004
School address	Abbots Way Newcastle ST5 2ES
Telephone number	01782 297345
Fax number	01782 297486

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Friarswood Primary School is a smaller-than-average school which fought a successful campaign against closure in 2006. This temporary uncertainty meant that considerably fewer children than usual joined the school in 2006, though numbers are beginning to build again now. The school has a high reputation for inclusion and particularly for its success with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This attracts pupils to the school and there is a greater-than-average proportion of pupils with these difficulties. This also results in a higher-than-usual number of children joining the school in classes other than the Nursery.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We feel that our child has been given the best possible start by a dedicated team,' was a typical parent's comment about this good school, which has some outstanding features. The school's richly deserved reputation for inclusion and outstanding work with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is one of its major strengths. This has led to an ethos of 'every child matters to the school', as a parent put it. Concern for the individual is high on the agenda and the school provides excellent pastoral care. Outstanding links have been forged with a wide range of outside agencies. Many visiting experts are used extremely well to support pupils who have difficulties. There are very strong links with parents, who are exceptionally supportive of the school, and many said they appreciate the approachable and friendly atmosphere.

The academic side has not been ignored in all this. Pupils make a good start in the Nursery. They begin with expected levels of skills and knowledge and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in the development of their basic skills in Nursery and Reception. Through the rest of the school, these foundations are built on solidly and pupils achieve well. Standards have improved well in the last few years and pupils reach well-above-average standards by the time they leave. However, standards in mathematics are not quite as high as those in English and science as fewer pupils gain the higher Level 5 in mathematics. This is because more-able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough in mathematics lessons. Despite these slightly lower standards in mathematics, most pupils make very good progress in Years 3 to 6 in all three subjects.

The good progress that pupils make is due to good teaching. Teachers plan well for mixed abilities in their classes. A major factor in pupils' good progress is the work of the skilful team of teaching assistants. They, in particular, are largely responsible for the excellent progress relative to their abilities made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are deployed well to use their differing skills and the coordinator for special needs has provided excellent training for them. There is some good practice in academic guidance, but targets to show pupils what they need to learn next are inconsistent. Teachers' marking, although thorough and encouraging, also does not often indicate how pupils can improve their work. The curriculum plays a large part in aiding pupils' progress as it is planned well to meet the needs of all. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in other subjects is a particular strength.

With all that the school provides, it is not surprising that pupils enjoy their school experience, behave well and work hard. A considerable part of the reason for this is that they know that their voice is listened to. Not only are their concerns taken seriously, but their contribution in terms of suggestions for improvements are acted on. Their contribution to the wider world is exemplary. Large sums have been raised for charities at home and abroad, often through the pupils' own initiative. The link with a school in Zimbabwe has not only involved pupils in raising well over £1500 to help the school rebuild after a storm, but has given pupils a real understanding of the needs of others.

One can do no better in summarising the school than this comment from a pupil: 'I like my school because I have great friends and fun lessons, brilliant dinners, a wicked school choir, great school trips and a super teacher.' The ethos of the school, and much of its success, is down to the vision of the headteacher, who has built a strong teamwork ethic and is supported

very well by all staff. With the progress that it has made and the drive for continued improvement, the school is well placed to continue and build on its success.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and continues to progress. Development has been hampered by the reduction in numbers joining the school last year caused by the threatened closure. This has meant that the small number of children of Reception age are being taught with pupils from Year 1. Although the teachers plan well to meet their needs and they are supported well by a skilled teaching assistant, it is not always possible to provide the full range of activities suitable for these young children. Despite this, children have a good start in Nursery and Reception and make sound progress across all areas of learning. Good use is made of the outside environment to extend children's learning. However, it is not possible for the well-equipped dedicated area to be included when children choose activities for themselves because of its distance from the classrooms. Management of the provision is sound and clear plans have been made for further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that more-able pupils are moved on to difficult work more quickly.
- Ensure that clear targets are set for pupils so that they know what they need to learn next and that teachers mark to these targets to tell pupils how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their starting point, which is broadly in line with expectations, pupils leave having reached well-above-average standards. They achieve well. However, their standards in mathematics, while still above average, are not as high as those in English and science. Weaknesses have been identified in particular areas of the subject and these are being addressed. But the main reason for the relatively weaker performance in mathematics is that too few pupils are working at higher levels. This is because, in lessons, more-able pupils are sometimes expected to finish work they can do easily before moving on to more difficult work.

The school is working hard to raise the performance of boys through the school. Although they make the same progress as girls, their starting point is quite a bit lower and the school is anxious to help them catch up. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding as their specific needs are addressed very effectively and excellent plans are made for their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are developing well into confident, polite and responsible young people. They are very conscious of the needs of others, and this is enhanced by the contacts they have had with pupils from the school they are supporting in Zimbabwe. However, they are not so aware of the range of cultures represented in their own country. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well. For example, they bring in few unhealthy snacks and almost all pupils take part in one or more of the wide range of after-school sports clubs. They know how to stay safe, though a

few sometimes play rather carelessly when, for instance, they let their football game at playtime roam amongst younger pupils. Pupils are being prepared well for their futures. As well as developing independence and basic skills well, they take part in an enterprise project organised by a local secondary school, which has been designated as a business and language college.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers organise their classes well and create an orderly working environment, based on the very good relationships they have with their pupils. This enables pupils to learn well and results in good attitudes to their work. Teachers usually provide a wide range of activities for the variety of pupil abilities in their classes. This ensures that pupils can learn at their own level. However, there are times when pupils, particularly the more able in mathematics, carry on with easier work for too long when they are ready to move on. There are also times when pupils sit listening to instructions for other pupils when they could be getting on with their own work. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and make many encouraging comments, but their marking does not often show pupils how they can improve their work. Teaching assistants are a valuable part of the teaching team and play a considerable role in aiding progress for pupils of all ability levels.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been planned well to meet the needs of the pupils. A particular strength is the broad range of subjects in which ICT is used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils do such things as researching geography and religious education topics and use software to create art. Other subjects are not used so effectively to aid learning in literacy and numeracy, for example, when writing accounts in history. A good range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning well, including a residential experience which extends their social development. A wide range of well-supported extra-curricular activities adds to the learning opportunities for pupils, especially in music and sport. Those who show particular talent for sports are guided to outside provision where they can receive expert help. However, there is little extra provided for those who show particular academic gifts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff show excellent care and concern for pupils. Many parents noted this, saying such things as, 'The school has a strong caring and nurturing atmosphere.' A particular strength is the two nurture groups, run by skilled teaching assistants. These enable pupils who find socialising difficult to learn to deal with conflict. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure and there is always an adult to turn to if they have problems. Safeguarding systems are robust.

Academic support and guidance are developing. Good records are kept of pupils' progress in each year group, but there are no records to easily see pupils' long-term progress, although the school has recently purchased software which will perform this function. There are good systems for checking on pupils' short-term progress to identify any who might be falling behind, although pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads by example and is dedicated and extremely hard working. His workload has been somewhat exacerbated by the reduction in numbers, which has left him with fewer teachers with management responsibilities. However, he has not allowed developments to slow because of this and has continued to put in place initiatives which have raised standards significantly over the last couple of years. In this he has been supported well by staff, all of whom have management responsibilities. He has created an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development through a good range of monitoring, shared by staff.

Governors are very supportive and worked tirelessly to support the campaign to keep the school open. However, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the school for themselves and are therefore not in a good position to challenge the headteacher effectively.

Challenging targets are set for pupils' progress from year to year, but these are not formally set down so it is not clear to everybody how well pupils are progressing towards these targets.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	1

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	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 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Friarswood Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST5 2ES

Thank you so much for all your help when I visited a while ago. I was very impressed with how polite and welcoming you were. So many of you came to talk to me in the playground or chatted to me around school that I gained a very good picture of how you get on. Many of you told me that you really enjoy school and love the different things you do. I am not surprised that you enjoy it so much as it is a good school with some outstanding features.

- I think that these are the best things about your school.
- All adults look after you extremely well and they do a particularly good job of helping those of you who find either your work or fitting in difficult.
- You do a great deal to help in all sorts of ways. You have made good suggestions about how the school could be improved and your collections for others, particularly Goredema School, are really super.
- Mr Selby and the staff make sure that they call on expert help whenever you need it. They have also done a great deal to show your parents how they can help you learn.
- You are making good progress because you are being taught well. You reach well-above-average standards by the time you leave.
- You are developing well into responsible and sensible young people.
- The work in all subjects is planned well to help you learn.
- I have suggested to your school that the following things could be improved.
- Some of you do not do quite as well in maths because you are not always moved on to more difficult work quickly enough.
- The targets set for you do not always show you exactly what you need to learn next. Sometimes your teachers, when they mark your work, do not show you how to improve.

You can help by making sure that you ask your teacher how to improve your work. Keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie Lead inspector