

Bhylls Acre Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124139
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314819
Inspection date	17 January 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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Cox
Headteacher	John Smith
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Bhylls Lane Castlecroft Wolverhampton WV3 8DZ
Telephone number	01902 761153
Fax number	01902 761153

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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 teachers use assessment information to plan lessons and set targets for pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and writing, and the systems used to track, record and improve it, and

how well the school's leaders and managers check and improve the work of the school.

Evidence was gathered from observations, 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 the skills expected for their age except in writing, which is weak. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic or mixed ethnic backgrounds. None are at the early stages of learning English. The school has had six temporary headteachers in just over two years. The present headteacher, who is permanent, took up post eight days before the inspection.

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 provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The vast majority of parents hold it in high regard, and acknowledge the difficulties the school faced through not having a permanent headteacher for some time. The following comment from a parent is fully justified and sums up the views of many: 'During this challenging time, the staff have maintained a positive, forward looking attitude.' The hard work and professionalism of the staff have ensured that test results have remained significantly above average in Year 6, including in 2007. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards seen in the work of pupils currently in Year 6 are average. The school is about to start booster classes for Year 6 pupils to give them the best possible chance of doing as well as they can in this year's national tests. Provision and progress are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage.

All staff are strongly behind the new headteacher, welcoming his leadership and sharing his vision for the school. In the past year, staff have successfully reviewed the curriculum and developed improved assessment and target setting systems. However, the school has several different ways of recording progress, making it difficult for leaders and managers to collate and analyse the information. Nevertheless, key members of staff know what to do to improve their subjects, an insight gained from checks on teaching and learning, sometimes carried out with local authority staff. Actions taken so far have led to measurable improvements in mathematics, in which subject targets are set throughout the school.

Writing remains a weakness in all age groups, a fact reflected in the test results in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have targets for writing and are being taught successfully to check and review their work and improve it by themselves. The impact of this initiative is shortly to be evaluated with a view to extending it to the whole school. The well-planned curriculum includes some good links between subjects and is enhanced by a good range of visitors, visits and extra-curricular activities, which are available to all pupils. It also identifies clearly where basic skills, including writing, could be promoted in all subjects. In practice, however, teachers do not always maximise opportunities for writing. Sometimes this is because they use too many worksheets, as in history and geography, and occasionally in English, limiting opportunities for pupils to write at length.

Where they have targets, pupils know and understand them, and how they can improve learning. For example, pupils say that through their targets, they have the opportunity 'to concentrate on getting one thing right at a time', and that they get 'to know what we have to do next'. Teachers recognise the impact targets are having on pupils' learning. However, their marking does not always reflect this and they often miss opportunities to show pupils the small steps they might take to reach their targets more quickly. This is an area for improvement in the otherwise good care, guidance and support given to pupils. Teachers always share learning objectives with pupils, revisiting them during and at the end of a lesson to check learning. Some teachers evaluate their planning really well, identifying how well individual pupils are doing and adapting planning to suit their needs. However, this good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. This results in a positive, calm and supportive learning environment for the pupils. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and carry out a wide range of responsibilities well. Behaviour is good, as is attendance, and pupils enjoy school. This aids their learning. They report that they 'get hard things to learn' and 'teachers are kind and helpful'. They feel safe, know how to keep themselves and others safe, and have a good

knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They acknowledge that bullying occurs occasionally but when asked if it was properly dealt with, they replied: 'It most certainly is.' Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures work and play well together. They have a strong sense of their school as a community, but while the school promotes race equality satisfactorily, pupils' knowledge of different cultures beyond the school is relatively limited.

The improvements made in the past year give the school a sound capacity for further improvement. It is clear from discussions and current draft plans that the headteacher, staff and governors have an accurate and realistic view of the school's performance and the areas in which improvement is needed. The missing link is a long-term strategic improvement plan to give it a clear agenda for the future. The headteacher and governors have already started work on this. Governors supported the school well through its difficult period and are now looking at ways to improve their monitoring of the school's effectiveness. However, in its self-evaluation form, the school overestimated its effectiveness because it based its judgement on standards rather than pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children reach the nationally expected standards for their age by the end of Reception. However, writing skills remain weak. Not enough is done to promote them, and this affects progress in writing in subsequent years. For example, the writing table is set up with different pens and pencils but there is little to encourage children to write spontaneously.

The curriculum for this age group covers all six required areas of learning and provides an appropriate balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. The areas designated for knowledge and understanding and role play are somewhat cramped and not conducive to free movement for children or adults. In discussion, staff pointed out the different learning areas in the room. However, there was little in the way of stimulating equipment ready on the tables for the children to work with following their whole-class session.

There is a good emphasis on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills. Their responses during a session on deciding how to resolve conflict showed a developing maturity in thought and speech. However, the whole-class session went on just a bit too long and they began to get restless. Good induction systems mean that children settle quickly and have good attitudes to school. Most put their hands up to answer the teacher, wait their turn to speak, and listen carefully to what others are saying.

What the school should do to improve further

- What the school should do to improve further
- Complete the targets for writing in all age groups and give pupils throughout the school more opportunities to write in all subjects.
- Improve teachers' marking so that it reflects pupils' targets, and settle on a consistent and manageable way of recording pupils' progress.
- Improve pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in Britain.

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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	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 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?	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?	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 Bhylls Acre Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV3 8DZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school this week, and for talking to me about your work. I found that your school is satisfactory. That means it does some things well but it could do even more to help you learn faster. You told me how much you enjoy school. This is evident in your good attendance and in the good behaviour I saw throughout the school. You know how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. The staff care for you well and you in turn care for and help each other. Your work as school councillors and 'buddies' helps you to do this.

The curriculum is planned well to ensure you cover all that you are supposed to learn, and you are taught properly. As a result, you make satisfactory progress in your learning and standards are average in Year 6. Your parents are right in thinking the staff have worked hard to make sure your learning did not suffer while the school did not have a permanent headteacher. Your teachers are getting better at assessing how well you are doing and planning what you need to do next. Your new headteacher and the other grown-ups who lead and manage the school have already thought of ways to improve all aspects of its work.

Here is what I have asked the school to do to help you learn faster.

- Give all of you targets for writing, and more opportunities to write in all subjects.
- Improve the way teachers mark your work and record your progress, to make it easier for you and your teachers to see what you need to do next.
- Improve your knowledge and understanding of the different cultures in Britain today.

You can help by continuing to behave as well as you do now, and by checking that you take your teachers' advice on how to improve your own work. I hope you continue to enjoy learning now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector

18 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bhylls Acre Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV3 8DZ

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Doris Bell
Lead inspector