

Springcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124163
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314827
Inspection date	18 June 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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Jeffries
Headteacher	Bernadette Malvern
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Grindley Lane Blythe Bridge Stoke-on-Trent ST11 9JS
Telephone number	01782 394793
Fax number	01782 394956

Age group	4-11
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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:

the effectiveness of what the school has done to improve writing

how well basic skills, especially writing, are supported by work in different subjects

the clarity and focus of monitoring and evaluation, especially in relation to the above.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, scrutiny of nationally published assessment data, analysis of the school's tracking and assessment data and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of Ofsted questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector 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 an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Healthy School award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has several outstanding features. The clarity of vision and strong sense of purpose provided by the headteacher have very successfully created a strong team of staff who care deeply for the pupils. As a result, pupils care for and respect each other, and they work and play in a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is above average. They feel safe in school, report that there is no bullying that they know of, and are very confident that staff will always help them if they have any concerns. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the provision the school makes for their children. They particularly recognise the excellent quality care, guidance and support their children receive. One parent, reflecting a typical view, said that this turns their children into 'well-rounded' young people. Overall, the school prepares its pupils well for their future.

Children start school with skills and experiences below the levels typically expected for their age. The good provision in the Foundation Stage sets them well on the path to good progress, which then continues throughout the school, resulting in good overall achievement and significantly above average standards by Year 6. Standards have remained significantly above average in Year 6 for the past five years, and also in Year 2 for most of that time. There have, however, been variations in pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 over time, most often caused by relative weaknesses in writing, an issue at the previous inspection. The school is tackling this well. Its measured approach has ensured that improvement is sustainable. More pupils are working at the higher levels in writing than previously, the school having successfully accelerated the progress of older pupils and given younger pupils a solid foundation on which to build. The results of this work is evident in all year groups, including through the many opportunities pupils have to use, extend and consolidate their writing skills in different subjects.

Pupils greatly appreciate the different ways in which teachers teach them. They say that 'it is fun to learn in this school', and cite mathematics as their favourite subject because of the high challenges teachers set them in practical, investigative activities. Progress in mathematics remains strong. The well-planned curriculum includes some good links between different subjects that contribute effectively to pupils' enjoyment of school. However, there is no clear overview of the curriculum to consolidate these links and ensure progression in skills throughout the school, although subject leaders do check what teachers are doing. An excellent range of activities, visits and visitors greatly enrich the curriculum and contribute to pupils' learning and outstanding personal development and well-being. These include good opportunities to learn about different cultures in Britain and around the world, and specialist teaching in, for example, physical education, art and music.

Large numbers of pupils participate in the many different sporting activities offered to them, including a highly popular outdoor activities residential visit. Year 5 pupils produced some really good writing reflecting on what they had done on that visit. All of this gives pupils an exceptionally good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, which they further demonstrated in their comments about healthy eating. They said, for example, that it is permissible to have 'a little bit of everything' as part of eating healthily. Pupils contribute well to the community, readily accepting responsibility, for example, as school councillors, playground leaders and 'buddies' to other pupils. They also reaching out to the wider community, raising funds for charity and participating in local and regional community events. The school council is proud of what it has achieved, secure in the knowledge that the headteacher values their

views and acts upon them if she can. For example, this led to improvements to drainage so that pupils could use the playing fields more often at playtime and lunchtime.

Pupils with learning difficulties make the same good progress as other pupils, often reaching nationally expected levels for their age well before they leave the school. The school intervenes early to support them in the areas they find difficult. It tracks all pupils' progress meticulously, quickly picking up any who start to fall behind and helping them catch up. It also caters well for pupils who show particular strengths in different subjects. Teachers usually mark pupils' work well but, occasionally, comments are missing or not precise enough to show pupils how to improve. Pupils contribute effectively to their own progress. Mindful of their targets in English and mathematics, they assess their own and each other's learning, and check with the teacher whether their views are accurate. Teachers also assess how well different groups of pupils have done in other subjects, recording their attainment at the end of each unit of work.

Underpinning the school's success is the good quality leadership and management provided by the headteacher, senior managers, governors and subject leaders, all of whom carry out rigorous checks on teaching and learning. Senior managers have successfully combined a strong commitment to accelerating pupils' progress with fostering in the pupils a love of learning and pride in themselves and their achievements. All of this, along with the pupils' good progress in basic skills, gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

The school's self-evaluation is robust. It is used well to set challenging targets for improvement and to inform school improvement planning. The plan itself sets the right priorities and they are well focused. However, the criteria by which progress towards them is monitored are somewhat vague, especially given the sharpness of most of the other work in the school. Governors carry out rigorous checks on the school's work, providing valuable constructive challenge for staff as they meet with their designated subject leaders to check provision and progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Well-managed provision gives the children a good start in their education, ensuring they settle well and quickly develop positive attitudes and high self-esteem. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of children of this age. They plan an interesting and relevant curriculum that builds up children's learning step by step, with a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. As a result, children gain good independent skills and quickly learn to share, take turns, listen to and help each other. Most staff are skilled at keeping a weather eye on what each group is doing, moving their learning on through relevant questions and suggestions without stifling the children's own ideas. Occasionally, however, a member of staff will over-direct one group, leaving the children little opportunity to think and work things out for themselves, while missing opportunities to interact with other groups to extend their learning.

The school has established a designated secure area for outdoor learning for this age group, for which work is planned across all areas of learning. This successfully addresses an issue raised at the previous inspection, although inclement weather prevented its use on the day of the inspection. The indoor environment provides an exciting mix of display and activities for the children, including, for example, opportunities to study plant growth and to see caterpillars turn into butterflies. Overall, children make good progress and reach average standards by the end of their Reception year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure teachers' written comments always provide pupils with reminders about how to improve their work.
- Establish a clear overview of the curriculum to consolidate the emerging good links that teachers are making between subjects.
- Be more specific about how progress towards addressing the priorities in the school improvement plan is to be measured.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springcroft Primary School, Blythe Bridge ST11 9JS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me yesterday when I visited your school. You told me you go to a good school and you are right. Your school has some excellent features. They help you to become mature, well-rounded young people, ready to face the future by the time you leave.

You said you really enjoy school, and that it is fun to learn because your teachers teach you in many different ways. All of this helps towards the good progress you make in all of your work, and I was very pleased to see how proud you are of your achievements. I noted that your behaviour was excellent whenever I saw you, whether at work or at play, and that you are polite and friendly at all times. The staff care deeply for you and you in turn respect and care for each other. You have an exceptionally good understanding of healthy living, and a very strong sense of how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. The many opportunities you have to participate in different kinds of sport help in this, but you clearly enjoy all of the other exciting activities the school puts on for you as well. Some of you even sounded disappointed that you could not take part in all of them because of your own commitments outside of school. Those responsible for leading and managing the school do it well. They regularly check the things they are responsible for and help each other to get better and better at what they are doing.

I have asked the school to do the following to put the finer touches on the good work it is already doing to help you make as much progress as possible.

- Make sure teachers' written comments always remind you how to improve your work.
- Draw up a clear overview of the curriculum to show the good links teachers make between subjects that help you to enjoy your learning.
- Be more specific about how it intends to measure progress towards the priorities it intends to tackle each year.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by remembering all the things you are told about how to improve your work. I hope you will continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now, for the rest of your lives.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector