

Moorhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124220
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314851
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Taylor
Headteacher	Sandra Peck
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Moorland Road Cannock WS11 4NX
Telephone number	01543 510241
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this much larger than average school, most pupils are of White British heritage. Many pupils come from homes that experience considerable social and financial hardship. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) is generally below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There have been significant staff changes since the previous inspection and eight newly qualified teachers were appointed in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards and achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 6. As a result, the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate.

Children make good progress and achieve well in the Foundation Stage (Reception) because provision is good. However, this good progress has not continued into Years 1 to 6. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are exceptionally low. In the past, teaching has not been good enough and there has been reluctance by some members of staff to make the changes necessary to accelerate pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils in Years 1 to 6 have not achieved as well as they should in English, especially in writing, and in mathematics and science. Achievement is therefore inadequate.

The leadership team has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and, with the appointment of new enthusiastic staff who are willing to take advice and learn, teaching is satisfactory. There is now evidence of some good teaching which is contributing to an improvement in pupils' progress. In Year 6 there are signs standards will be higher this year, particularly in mathematics. Progress in lessons has improved and is currently satisfactory but it is not yet sufficiently rapid to resolve the legacy of significant underachievement in Years 1 to 6. Nevertheless, the recent steps taken by the leadership team to strengthen teaching and learning have enabled improvements in progress to take place. The key reasons that teaching is satisfactory rather than good are that assessment information is not always accurate and the work given to pupils does not consistently challenge all pupils to ensure their good progress.

Pastoral care is good, and all procedures for ensuring the well-being of pupils are securely in place. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in supporting the pastoral needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, in line with their peers, they also do not make the academic progress of which they are capable. Good links with outside agencies ensure those who are vulnerable receive good support, and the few pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour are managed skilfully by the adults in school. Academic guidance for all pupils is satisfactory; however, due in part to past inconsistencies in the accuracy of the assessment data there has been insufficient time to make a significant influence to the quality of pupils' learning.

Pupils enjoy school but they speak more enthusiastically about the clubs, visits and visitors, rather than their lessons. The curriculum, although satisfactory, is too narrow, especially for older pupils. The long morning sessions focusing on English and mathematics lacks excitement and creativity and the opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different curriculum areas are only now being introduced. The behavior of the majority of pupils is good and pupils respond well to responsibility, such as school council members or house captains. They have a sound understanding of the need to keep fit, active and healthy, although some do not always eat as healthily as they should. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and nearly always get on well with each other. One said, 'the teachers are kind and they listen if you have a problem'.

The headteacher's clear direction for school improvement is based on accurate evaluation and identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members of staff and governors are committed to raising standards and they understand the next steps needed to improve the school. They have satisfactorily demonstrated that they can secure the necessary improvement. Well-focused monitoring, for example, has improved teaching and learning, which are now satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures children make good progress, and by the end of Reception, the majority are working securely within the goals expected for their age. However, their writing skills are not as developed as other aspects of their learning. Activities are planned carefully with a good balance between those led by staff and those selected by children. For example, children worked independently on reading, writing, and information and communication technology (ICT) activities, while staff worked with groups of children developing their understanding of the vocabulary, 'taller and shorter'. This busy learning environment is a result of the effective teamwork of skilled and well managed staff. Good communication with parents and good links with the main pre-school provider ensures children settle quickly into school life. They are happy and behaviour is good. They enjoy working together, and have a good understanding of how to be safe and healthy. Although the indoor curriculum is good, the opportunities for children to learn outdoors are not as extensive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English, especially writing, and mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6.
- Ensure assessments are accurate and used rigorously to plan the next steps in pupils' learning so that they are challenged appropriately and make good progress.
- Develop a more creative curriculum, maximising opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children make good progress in the Reception classes and, on entry to Year 1; the majority of them are working at levels expected for their age. However, until recently pupil progress in Years 1 - 6 has been inadequate and standards of attainment have been below average.

In 2007, pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests declined significantly and standards were exceptionally low at the end of both Years 2 and 6. These low standards and inadequate progress were partly the result of past weaknesses in teaching. For older pupils they were due to erroneous assessments, particularly in Years 3 and 4 that exaggerated their progress and standards. As teaching has improved so has pupils' progress. There is now strong evidence of improving standards in Year 6, particularly in mathematics. However, in other year groups, although progress is improving, as yet it is not fast enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement in English, especially in writing and in mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school, particularly their visits to art galleries, theatres and museums. They are well mannered, and supportive of each other. Working together, they say, is useful: 'We learn lots by talking about our ideas with our friends'. The behaviour of the majority is good although a minority of pupils display challenging behaviour. Although this is managed effectively, there are times when learning is disrupted. In the questionnaire returns some parents expressed concerns about bullying, but pupils say incidents are rare and if they do occur, staff sort out problems instantly. Attendance is broadly average.

Pupils know how to keep safe and of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Many take advantage of the wide range of clubs and games in order to keep fit. They speak knowledgeably about eating healthily but do not always use this knowledge when making choices in what they eat. Pupils have satisfactory links with the local community and regularly raise money for charities such as Sport Relief. Pupils' low skills in literacy and numeracy mean they are inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is improving, which is clearly demonstrated by the improving progress of pupils throughout the school. However, as assessment information is not always accurate, activities planned are not always sufficiently challenging for the range of ability within the class and teachers are not always sure of the learning necessary to accelerate pupils' progress. Relationships are good, which means pupils are willing to answer questions. Teachers use effective behaviour management strategies so lessons run smoothly. Opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about their work are good and these discussions help pupils to develop a secure understanding about what they have to do to make their work better. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to ensure pupils with learning difficulties are able to access all activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, it narrows as pupils become older and is not broad enough to provide sufficient opportunities for creativity and the practical application of basic skills. The strategy of grouping Year 2 to Year 6 pupils by ability during long and quite intense morning sessions means the curriculum does not always meet the learning needs of all pupils. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory but regular access to ICT is hindered through frequent thefts of the computers. A strength of the curriculum is the range of enrichment opportunities provided such as singing with the Lichfield Cathedral choir which pupils speak about with enthusiasm. Pupils love their French songs and say these language sessions are motivating and fun. There is strong and well-planned support for pupils' social and emotional development, using nationally recognised strategies.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is aware that many pupils experience a range of challenging circumstances. Particularly good pupil care includes early breakfast, late tea and holiday provision making the school an oasis of support. The school has a strong track record of swift and effective action to ensure pupils' safety and a close working relationship with appropriate external support agencies. There are rigorous systems for reducing absence rates, resulting in broadly average attendance. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, ensuring they are sensitively included in all that the school offers.

Support and guidance for pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. In many classes, pupils receive helpful and focused marking of their work. However, past weaknesses in assessment have affected pupils' progress. . The school has worked to address these weaknesses and target setting is improving. There is growing and effective use of pupil self-assessment that is helping pupils understand how to make improvements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Systematic monitoring and self-evaluation have ensured the leadership is aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information informs action plans that focus sharply on the important issues facing the school. However, improvements to standards and achievement have been slow, while the headteacher has worked tirelessly to overcome staffing disruption and a legacy of resistance to new ways of working.

The new staff team and governors share the same vision for raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. There is a strong team spirit. Subject leaders are using self-review and training to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, their work has not had sufficient time to have a full effect on pupils' learning and ensure consistency throughout the school. The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory and this is understandable in the light of the recent improvements. However, the impact of improvements to pupils' achievement is only just beginning and consequently, overall effectiveness and value for money remains inadequate. Although governors are supportive, their role of challenge is insufficiently developed.

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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?	4
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Moorhill Primary School, Cannock WS11 4NX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. We found some good things, but we also found out you are not making as much progress in English, especially writing, and in mathematics and science as you should. This means your school is not effective enough and so we have asked your school to make sure it improves before inspectors come back in a year's time to check your learning is better and you are reaching higher standards. There are many good things happening, however. Those of you in the Reception classes make good progress and this is because you get lots of interesting things to do. Most of you seem to enjoy school and you get lots of opportunities to visit interesting places, such as museums and art galleries. We know those of you in the choir enjoyed singing at Lichfield Cathedral. We wish we could have come to listen to your wonderful singing. The costumes you wore to celebrate 'World Book Day' were amazing and we had good fun guessing the book character you were supposed to be. All the many after-school clubs and games activities help you to keep fit. You know the importance of eating healthily, although you don't always make sensible eating choices. It is good to know you feel safe in school and adults will always help if you have a problem. Your behaviour is good and we think school council members and house captains do a good job in helping to make things better in school.

We think your headteacher and all teachers are working hard to help you learn more quickly and there are signs that your progress is improving. Already we can see a difference in Year 6, especially in mathematics. We hope those of you in this year group will continue to work hard for your teachers. We have suggested that to help to speed up your progress, your headteacher makes sure that everyone is very clear about what you know already and this information is used carefully to help you learn even faster. Also we have asked that the curriculum is taught in a more fun way and you get lots of opportunities to use your literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

It is important now that you help your teachers by trying your very hardest in lessons. Thank you again for helping us during this inspection and we wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs L. Furness Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector