

Etching Hill CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124292
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314877
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Gladdy
Headteacher	Jennifer Dodd
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2001
School address	Penk Drive North Etching Hill Rugeley WS15 2XY
Telephone number	01889 256112
Fax number	01889 256116

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2008
Inspection number	314877

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools and mainly serves the local community, an area of relative socio-economic advantage. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, this proportion is increasing as the school becomes more proficient at identifying pupils with additional needs. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and there is a relatively new governing body. There is Nursery provision. The school has achieved Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's effectiveness is inadequate. 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 circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is given a Notice to Improve. Despite recent improvements, the school is not providing an adequate education for its pupils. Significant improvements are required to the achievement and standards reached by pupils and the quality of teaching and learning.

The new headteacher and governors are very aware of the challenges that face the school and where important improvements need to be made. Plans have been carefully drawn up and the school is starting to change for the better. There has been some resistance to new ways of doing things but the dogged determination of the headteacher and governors has resulted in increasing numbers of staff and parents recognising the value of the important improvements that have been made. However, some parents remain concerned that some of the changes may not be for the better. The governors and headteacher have a steadfast commitment to development. This, together with accurate self-evaluation and recent improvements in the curriculum and in provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, demonstrates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Achievement is inadequate. When pupils enter Year 1 their standards are above national expectations and sometimes well above average, but by the time they reach the end of Year 6 their standards are only in line with national averages. Progress is inadequate in both English and mathematics and pupils are making particularly slow progress in writing. Higher-ability pupils are not making sufficient progress. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Their personal development is satisfactory. They are aware of how to keep healthy and safe and they are keen to make a good contribution to the school community.

Across the school, there is too much inadequate teaching and not enough good teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and help them catch up. The headteacher has carefully monitored the quality of teaching and learning and accurately identified exactly where the weaknesses lie. Strategies to improve teaching and learning, including working with the local authority, have resulted in important improvements in practice in some areas. Nevertheless, there is still too much inadequate teaching and not enough good teaching. Lessons move along too slowly and expectations are often not high enough. Work is not always well matched to pupils' needs and there is insufficient challenge, especially for middle and higher-ability pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make inadequate progress when taught as part of the whole class, but they are making good progress when they are taught as part of the newly established withdrawal groups because the work is more carefully matched to their needs. There is insufficient academic guidance for pupils. Marking does not tell pupils how to improve their work and targets are not always used effectively. Improvements have been made to the curriculum, including provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics. A good range of extra-curricular activities makes school much more interesting and enjoyable for pupils. There is particularly good provision for sport and pupils enthusiastically join in with these activities.

The leadership and management have been strengthened by recent appointments. Although middle managers are committed and hardworking, some lack the knowledge and skills necessary

to help the headteacher and governors bring about change. The school does not meet all statutory requirements. For example, it does not have a racial equality policy and, although there have been improvements to routines that promote pupils' safety and well-being, there are still shortcomings in some areas.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start Nursery with skill levels that are above national expectations. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and enter Year 1 with standards that are above expectations and sometimes well above average. Satisfactory teaching, combined with interesting activities, ensures that children enjoy their time in school and learn effectively. There is a supportive atmosphere in the Nursery and Reception classes and, as a result, children are happy, settled and well cared for. Children learn to concentrate and to work and play together. They develop appropriate levels of independence. The accommodation in the Reception class restricts the range of quiet activities that can be planned and there is insufficient provision for outdoor play. As a result, children make relatively slower progress in their social and physical development. Staff develop children's understanding and language skills through good use of questioning but sometimes there are too few staff, which affects the balance between adult-led and independent activities. This slows progress. Recently, boys have made better progress in reading and writing than girls as a consequence of boy-friendly topics such as 'Knights and Castles'. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have brought about recent improvements to assessment procedures.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate achievement in both writing and mathematics by ensuring that middle-ability and more-able pupils are given work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations, quickening the pace of lessons and ensuring that lesson activities are closely matched to the needs of pupils.
- Ensure that marking tells pupils how to improve in their work and that target-setting is used more effectively.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of middle managers.
- Make certain that all statutory requirements are met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter Year 1 with standards above national expectations, but their progress through Key Stage 1 has been relatively slow because teachers do not always plan work in Year 1 that builds on pupils' above-average standards. Recently, pupils' progress has accelerated because of improvements to the quality of teaching, particularly in Year 2. However, pupils have been falling behind in Years 3 to 6 often because teachers' expectations are too low. Achievement has been inadequate in both English and mathematics. Achievement in mathematics is starting to improve but pupils' progress in writing is still far too slow. Parents are right to be concerned about the achievement of higher-ability pupils. They are not making sufficient progress and, during the inspection, a group of older, more-able girls described how bored they were in literacy lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are well mannered, considerate and supportive of each other. Their spiritual and moral development is particularly strong, reflecting the church's contribution to the school's curriculum. Pupils work hard in lessons. When they have the opportunity, they work well in groups but are also happy to work independently. Attendance rates are above average, reflecting parents' strong commitment to education and pupils' satisfactory enjoyment of school. Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy but do not always make healthy eating choices when faced with temptation. However, pupils really enjoy sport and exercise. The school's programme of personal and health education is helping pupils to learn to manage the risks they may come across in everyday life. Bullying is not common and pupils say when it does happen it is dealt with effectively by teachers. Pupils are actively involved in fundraising. They want to make a positive contribution to the local and wider community, for example, through their work as 'playground buddies', with the school council and doing little jobs around school. Pupils' future economic well-being is restricted by inadequate achievement and particularly by their slow progress in developing their writing skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching has improved from a very low base but too much remains inadequate. However, there are small pockets of good teaching but insufficient to make up for lost ground. Relationships between teachers and pupils are usually good, but in some lessons the teaching style can overwhelm girls and some of the quieter boys. Teachers' expectations are often not high enough and teachers sometimes presume that if pupils are occupied they are learning successfully. However, this is not always the case and work is not always providing effective challenge, especially for middle- and higher-ability pupils. In too many lessons, the pace is slow and pupils produce insufficient work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. Unfortunately, what is planned is not always adequately delivered. The mathematics curriculum has been improved by a greater emphasis on mental arithmetic and problem-solving, and planning for more consistency in the teaching of mathematical operations. There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing. The setting arrangement in literacy and numeracy are sometimes insufficiently sensitive to pupils' individual abilities. The purchase of new laptops has enabled the curriculum for ICT to be improved. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved, leading to better identification of pupils with additional learning needs, and the teaching of pupils in small groups is greatly accelerating their progress. There is a sound curriculum for personal, social and health education. Links with the local community, including strong links with the parish church, broaden pupils' opportunities. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of school clubs and they have good access to a wide range of sporting opportunities. A good range of local and residential visits makes learning more relevant and fun.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Pastoral care is satisfactory. For example, pupils are carefully looked after if they are ill. Parents report that children who are new to the school are made very welcome and settle quickly. Child protection procedures are in place but the school does not have appropriate procedures in place to meet the needs of looked-after children. Although improvements have been made to health and safety, including enhancing security, the development of a new health and safety policy has been slow and some aspects of procedures to ensure pupils' safety are still not tight enough. Many parents expressed concerns about communication with the school. Written communication has improved but it is difficult for parents to speak to staff informally, and this is particularly important for parents of younger children and those with additional needs. Marking of pupils' work is often cursory and does not tell pupils how to improve their work. Insufficient and inconsistent use is made of targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Satisfactory monitoring and self-evaluation have ensured that the headteacher and the governing body are very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have carefully thought-out plans designed to address those areas where improvements are needed. Monitoring of teaching by the headteacher, assisted by external advisors, is satisfactory and has accurately identified where there are shortcomings. However, improvements to achievement, standards and teaching have been relatively slow as the middle managers do not always have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide leaders with effective support to drive through important changes to practice. Although governors are providing very effective challenge, they have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	No
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4

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	4
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Etching Hill School, Rugeley, WS15 2XY

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we visited your school. We thought your behaviour was good and noticed that you always try your best in lessons. You told us that you really enjoy your sports and exercise. It is good that you know how to keep fit and healthy, but some of you could make better choices of food. You make a good contribution to the school through your work as buddies and with the school council. We were pleased to see how keen you are to help whenever possible.

At the moment, your school is not providing you with a satisfactory education but the staff at your school are working hard to improve the situation. That is why we have given your school a Notice to Improve. This means that inspectors will come back in about a year to check that you are getting a better quality of education.

When you started school you were ahead of other children but by the time you leave your standards in English and mathematics are similar to those achieved by pupils in other schools. You are not making enough progress because you are not all given challenging enough work in lessons. Higher-ability pupils could do better and your writing needs to be improved. We have asked your teachers to improve teaching by making sure that the work you are set is not too easy and that lessons move along more quickly. We have also asked them to help to improve your progress by making sure that marking tells you exactly how to make your work better and by working with you to set targets.

We know that school leaders are trying to make your school a better place but we have asked some of the other teachers to develop their management skills so they can help the headteacher more. We have asked the governors to make sure that the school has all its important policies in place.

You can help too by working hard and doing your very best and by asking your teachers how you can improve your work.

All the best for the future.

Susan Walsh Lead inspector