

Hutchinson Memorial CofE (A) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124333
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314891
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Fallon
Headteacher	Jane Davies
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2003
School address	Uttoxeter Road Checkley Stoke-on-Trent ST10 4NB
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Hutchinson Memorial First is smaller than most other primary schools. All pupils come from a White British background. Children's attainment on entry to school is in line with the expectations for three-year-olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than in most schools. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is moving in the right direction following a significant period of disruption within senior management. In a relatively short time, the acting headteacher has established a strong commitment to improving pupils' achievements. Staff and governors work together with a strong sense of purpose and they share the acting headteacher's clear vision for the future. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and all of them attain or exceed the goals expected for their age on entry to Year 1. From this point onwards, pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress is no better than this because lessons do not always provide a consistent level of challenge to allow pupils to do their best. Teachers have a wealth of information about pupils' achievements but some do not use this information well enough to plan the next steps in learning, especially for the more able pupils. Well-focused support and the sensitive handling of pupils who sometimes struggle with their behaviour help these pupils to play a positive part in school life. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming. They are considerate and this helps to build constructive working relationships with adults and each other. Adults value pupils' efforts and praise their achievements but teachers' marking does not always provide sufficient information for pupils about how they can improve their work further. Pupils also have targets to help them do better in their work but some pupils do not always understand what their targets mean.

Parents rightly feel their children are well looked after. Pupils say they feel safe and they act sensibly in and around the school. Pupils make good use of the sporting activities the school provides and this helps to keep them fit and healthy. Pupils are developing a clear understanding of the world of work. They carry out fundraising events and their skills in literacy and numeracy prepare them adequately for the future. The school council is increasingly involved in making their school a better place to be but pupils generally do not have enough say in how they would like to learn. They have some clear ideas about how their learning could be made more interesting and they suggest that lessons could be even more exciting. Boys do not always find writing activities sufficiently appealing and they are more reluctant than girls to record their ideas and views. This results in boys not making the same good progress in writing as girls.

The different systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have identified the right priorities for development and this is helping to bring about change for the better. Curriculum leadership teams are a new arrangement this term and these teams are yet to be involved fully in evaluating the success of the school's work. This means that the school does not always check the success of its initiatives well enough to ensure they are having the required effect.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Foundation Stage. In the Nursery and Reception classes, staff pay close attention to children's learning needs. Activities provide good opportunities for children to explore, investigate, and try things out for themselves. These positive features develop the children's natural inquisitiveness successfully. Children are happy and relationships are good because staff treat children with respect and recognise their hard work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils a greater say in how they learn and provide more inspiring writing opportunities for boys.
- Ensure teachers make better use of the information they have about pupils' achievements to plan work that challenges the more able pupils to do their best.
- Ensure that targets for improvement and teachers' marking give better guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work.
- Ensure that curriculum leadership teams play a more effective role in evaluating the school's work.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Their attainment by the end of the Reception Year is above that expected for their age. Standards remain above average by the end of Years 2 and 4 and pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress. The school has a trend of higher standards in writing than in reading and mathematics. This is because not as many pupils attain the higher levels in reading and mathematics as they do in writing. Although investigative work in science and mathematics appeals to pupils and encourages greater effort, standards are not rising faster because the challenge in lessons for the more able pupils is not always high enough.

Girls' performance in the 2007 national tests was particularly high in writing and they make good progress. Boys, although they do better than boys do nationally, do not do as well as girls. Boys say they do not always find writing activities interesting. They say they enjoy mathematics and science more because they have greater opportunities to learn through playing games and by doing things for themselves. Recent developments to inspire boys and raise their interest in writing are beginning to take effect in Year 2. Here, boys talk enthusiastically about looking at video clips for example, and how these provide good ideas for their writing. However, this is not yet a strong feature in other year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are kind and considerate to others. They look out for each other and act sensibly because they have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Behaviour is satisfactory and lessons run smoothly. Pupils make satisfactory choices to support healthy lifestyles. They know all about healthy eating but some still choose to eat unhealthy foods. On the other hand, their choices about exercise are more positive. Many express an enjoyment of physical education and they make good use of the sporting events held in and out of school. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. They attend church, take part in local events, and raise money for charity because they recognise that there are others less fortunate than they are. Pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy, and activities such as team sports and fundraising, prepare them satisfactorily for the future. The school council plays an active role in decision-making but the school acknowledges it could do more to canvass the views of pupils about their learning.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory. They like their school and they find some lessons fun but this in turn means that some learning does not always excite them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Positive relationships between pupils and teachers help to develop calm and orderly classrooms. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to support pupils' learning. The programs they choose are often lively and bright. These capture the pupils' interest and this helps pupils to concentrate hard and develop their ideas successfully. Boys in particular like this visual stimulus and they say it helps them to understand their work. Teachers gather a comprehensive range of information about how well pupils are doing. They use this information to help plan the next steps in learning but not always well enough to provide challenge for the more able pupils. This is because sometimes these pupils complete the same work as average-attaining pupils before moving on to work that is more demanding. Some rather uninspiring worksheets, especially in Years 3 and 4, also reduce the opportunities for these pupils to develop their own ideas and to devise different ways of recording their work. Teachers' marking tells pupils how well they have done but does not always give pupils enough information about how they can do better.

Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly and soon know the classroom routines. Staff have a systematic approach to teaching the key skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as encouraging talk. As a result, children develop a firm foundation for their future learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for the most part builds satisfactorily on what the pupils have learned before, although this is not always the case for the more able pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage on the other hand, have a rich and vibrant curriculum. Here, activities provide a good balance of exploration and investigation, as well as opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their learning. These features enable children to do well. Pupils like the range of activities the school offers outside lessons. These enrich pupils' learning and contribute successfully to aspects of their personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and child protection procedures are firmly in place. Parents are pleased with the level of care their children receive. Pupils say they feel safe and they are convinced they will receive prompt help if they experience any problems. Increased use of outside agencies provides some good support for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The well-focused help from learning support assistants enables these pupils to be fully involved in lessons and helps speed their learning. The school involves parents in setting targets for improvement. This is a positive move but some parents would like regular feedback about the success of these targets. Pupils are aware of their targets but some do not understand them. This means that that not all pupils are sure about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governors are very pleased with the start the acting headteacher has made in bringing about improvement. Evaluation systems identify the correct priorities for improvement and governors are in a stronger position now to raise questions about the school's performance. Staff morale is high since the introduction of curriculum teams. Staff say these teams distribute the workload more efficiently and that they now share good practice and pool their ideas more effectively. This is positive, but the curriculum teams are not yet involved fully in checking the school's success in meeting its priorities for improvement. The acting headteacher acknowledges this fact also that this leaves too much for her to do. This allows inconsistencies in the school's work to persist, for example in teachers' planning. In some instances, this slows the rate of learning, especially for the more able. Parents are supportive but the governors and the acting headteacher acknowledge that they could do more to increase the level of communication with parents, particularly in terms of more regular feedback about their children's achievements.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	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?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you about all the different things you like to do. The people in charge and your teachers do a satisfactory job and this is helping you to make satisfactory progress. The standards you attain by the time you leave school are above those expected by Year 4.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school:

- children in the Nursery and Reception classes do well
- you act sensibly and care for others because you know how to keep safe and free from harm
- you play sports and take plenty of exercise because you know how important it is to grow up fit and strong
- you get on well with each other and with your teachers
- you say you feel safe because your teachers take good care of you
- you make good use of the interesting clubs outside normal lessons
- adults give good support to children who sometimes have difficulties with their behaviour.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on four things:

- find ways to make writing activities more exciting and enjoyable and give you more say about what you are learning
- make sure that your teachers use the information they have about how well you are doing to plan work that helps you all to do your very best
- make sure you know how you can improve your work and do even better
- check more carefully that plans to help you improve are really working well.

With best wishes for the future