

Forsbrook CofE Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132260
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	315996
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Pretty
Headteacher	William Durose
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 0001
School address	Cheadle Road Blythe Bridge Stoke-on-Trent ST11 9PW
Telephone number	01782 392577
Fax number	01782 392003

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but it fluctuates in different year groups. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also below average. A significant proportion of pupils join the school after Year 2. The school has the Eco Green Flag, an Investors in People award, a Healthy Schools award and the Active Mark.

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 with some outstanding features. Excellent teamwork, the pupils' ability to listen to, value and respect the opinions of others, and the good progress they make in basic skills all leave them exceptionally well prepared for the future. Their behaviour is exemplary and they thoroughly enjoy school, as their good attendance shows. All of this is the outcome of the first-rate care, guidance and support pupils receive from the moment they start school. Additionally, there is a wealth of extra-curricular and enrichment activities in which large numbers of pupils participate. Parents praise highly all of these aspects and also the dedication and commitment of the staff to their pupils. Within this very positive picture, pupils successfully learn about different cultures around the world. Their understanding of the different cultures that exist in Britain today is not quite as good.

Provision is good in the Foundation Stage. As a result, children make good progress and most exceed the standards expected for the end of Reception. The weakest area is literacy, especially writing, which is average. Achievement is good in the rest of the school and standards are significantly above average. This is because teaching is good and, in Key Stage 2, sometimes outstanding. Pupils stated unanimously that their teachers are the best thing about the school because 'they are kind' and 'they make school fun'. Teachers are beginning to make worthwhile links between subjects, drawing on the good guidance they have in the well planned curriculum. However, when they make these links, they do not always consider the best ways of recording pupils' progress in all of the subjects involved.

Leaders and managers, including governors, understand their roles well and contribute effectively to whole school improvement. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate. It has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. However, it plans ahead only one year at a time, and does not include clear written success criteria in that planning. The lack of strategic, long-term planning means the school does not have a clear enough agenda to keep it on track over time, for example, in setting increasingly challenging targets for each year group, built on what teachers know of pupils' current progress. Nevertheless, achievement and standards have improved significantly in the past three years and the teamwork evident amongst the staff mirrors the excellent teamwork they develop in the pupils. All of this gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching and a well structured curriculum ensure that children make good progress during their Reception Year. Standards are above average at the end of Reception except in communication, language and literacy, where they are average. This reflects weaknesses in writing which are evident when the children start school. Speaking and listening skills are good and there is a good range of opportunities for children to engage in early writing skills. However, the children do not take enough advantage of these and they are not always sufficiently encouraged to do so.

Children's learning is tracked well and their progress recorded carefully. Staff use this information to plan lively and stimulating activities to which the children respond well. The strong focus on personal, social and emotional development successfully encourages children to share, take turns, behave well and respect each other and adults. The current series of visits from health

professionals are being used really well to foster the children's understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. Children carry these skills with them throughout their time at the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen school improvement planning by including in it clear success criteria, and take a longer term view of school improvement.
- Formalise the links made between subjects and, when such links are made, ensure pupils' progress is recorded in all of the subjects involved.
- Strengthen pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in this country.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils, from the least to the most able, achieve well throughout the school. This year, the test results for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 were significantly above the national average, including at the higher levels in English and science in Year 6. The above average standards seen in pupils' work in Year 6 show that the upward trend in recent years is set to continue. In Year 2, they show that the recent decline in standards has been halted. Despite the positive picture in writing, there remain weaknesses in grammar, spelling and punctuation in Year 2 that are not always tackled well enough in lessons.

Throughout the school, pupils readily take advantage of the many opportunities they have to write in other subjects. However, they do not always use their writing skills well enough when doing so, or think about how they might make faster progress towards their writing targets if they did. The more practical approach the school has recently adopted towards teaching mathematics and science is improving pupils' ability to investigate and solve problems. This was a weakness the school had identified.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They thoroughly enjoy school, as their good attendance shows. They are extremely polite, well mannered, respectful and self-disciplined. Parents praise the school highly for this and for the confidence it instils in their children. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness is exceptionally good. Their cultural awareness is good. Their understanding of the cultural diversity that exists in this country is less well developed than their knowledge of different cultures around the world, which is strong.

Pupils readily accept responsibility. They carry out their duties well, for example, as school councillors, house captains and playground buddies. They know how to keep safe and they make a good contribution to the community. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils say bullying is 'extinct' but welcome the fall back position provided by the concerns boxes, buddies and the school council. Large numbers participate in physical and sporting activities in and outside of school, showing their excellent understanding of healthy living.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The significant amount of outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2 moves pupils' learning on fast. The wide range of teaching approaches used successfully in this age group engages pupils really well and gives them responsibility for their own learning. Older pupils often help to construct the success criteria for their lessons, measure their progress against those criteria and review them in readiness for the next lesson. All of this contributes greatly to pupils' learning and personal development. The challenge it presents for pupils enables them successfully to meet the teachers' high expectations of their work rate and behaviour.

Teachers' planning is good throughout the school because it builds on what pupils have already learned. This and the good and often excellent use of assessment during lessons are particular strengths in teaching. In their marking of literacy, teachers usually give pupils points for improvement. This good practice is not always as consistent when, for example, subjects are linked together. In both key stages, teachers miss opportunities to show pupils how they can reach their literacy or numeracy targets when doing work in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The exceptionally large number of very well attended extra-curricular clubs and activities covering sport and the arts, and the extensive range of visits and visitors greatly enhance pupils' learning. They form the backbone of a well planned, well organised curriculum that greatly supports pupils' health, safety and well-being.

Themed days in and out of school bring the curriculum alive for the pupils, for example, in history. The school's involvement in a project promoting personalised learning and the introduction of modern foreign languages and music tuition all greatly enrich the learning opportunities available to pupils. The curriculum caters well for the needs, interests and abilities of all pupils from the least to the most able. Useful links are beginning to emerge between subjects but they are too informal. The lack of a systematic approach here means that teachers do not always record pupils' progress in the different subjects they bring together. They do this well when the subjects are being taught separately.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents greatly appreciate the very effective way the school's first-rate provision in this aspect of its work turns their children into 'confident, happy personalities'. The school's strong partnership with parents, other schools and external agencies contributes greatly to this. Safeguarding procedures are robust. These procedures and the good academic guidance given to pupils are fully embedded in the school's work. All pupils have targets. Most can explain clearly what they need to do to reach them because, in all age groups, they are involved productively in assessing their own and others' learning. This, alongside the use of marking ladders and checklists, which are also shared with parents, gives them a good insight as to how to improve their own work. Well constructed, child-friendly individual education plans and the effective use of well briefed teaching assistants do the same for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Following the clear educational direction given by senior managers and governors, staff contribute effectively to the targets set for the whole school. Improvements in teaching in Key Stage 2 resulted in the school greatly exceeding last year's targets. Targets for Year 6 this year have already been revised upwards. There is scope to take this even further next year and beyond, but there is no strategic long term planning to provide a clear agenda for doing so.

The current school development plan, to which staff and governors contribute effectively, has a sensible number of well focused priorities for this year. However, it does not show clearly enough the success criteria against which progress towards the priorities will be measured. Nevertheless, the checks the school makes on its work, including teaching and learning, are robust and accurate. They have led to improvement, particularly in the past three years. Governors understand their roles and fulfil them well. They know the school well because they carry out their own monitoring and regularly check the impact of management decisions on pupils' learning.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
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	2
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	1

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

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Forsbrook Primary School, Blythe Bridge, Stoke on Trent ST11 9PW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave Mr Wehrmeyer and me when we visited your school this week, and for talking to us about the school and your work. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school which helps you to become mature, confident and independent young people. We were particularly impressed with your excellent behaviour and with how polite and well mannered you are. You certainly know how important it is to keep yourselves fit and healthy, and you know how to keep yourselves and others safe.

You told us that you really enjoy school, and that your teachers are kind and helpful. We agree with you that you are taught well and that your teachers make learning fun. All staff care deeply for you and want you to do your best. The headteacher and governors run the school well. They keep a close eye on how your teachers teach you. They also make sure that the curriculum meets the needs of each and every one of you. Your school wants to be outstanding. To help it get there, we have asked it to sharpen up some of what it is already doing.

- When planning for the future, to plan further ahead than one year, and make sure that the plans include success criteria to help it measure its progress. This is exactly the same as some of you are asked to do when you construct the success criteria for your lessons.
- To make sure that when teachers link subjects together, as they often do, they are clear, and they help you to be clear, about the progress you make in each one of those subjects.
- Strengthen your understanding of the range of cultures in Britain today.

You can help the school in all of these things by continuing to do your best at all times and we hope you will continue to enjoy learning throughout your lives as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector