

Belgrave CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132730
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	316003
Inspection dates	23–24 January 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Johnson
Headteacher	Christopher Brislen
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Sussex Place Longton Stoke-on-Trent ST3 4TP
Telephone number	01782 235523
Fax number	01782 235525

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school has an above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has a well-above-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani, a large number of whom start school with little or no English. Children start the Foundation Stage with skill levels significantly below those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is also above average. The school has numerous awards for its work, including Investors in People, Activemark Gold for physical education, Artsmark, the Healthy School Award and the Children's Fund Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This highly successful school provides an excellent standard of education for its pupils. A very strong focus on the learning and personal needs of each individual underpins all of its work and ensures a high quality of care, guidance and support. Parents recognise this. It is summed up really well in one parental comment, which echoes the views of many: 'It's not a school, it's one big family. Every child matters and is praised for their merit.' The fun and enjoyment pupils get out of learning are the key to their excellent achievement in this happy, extremely well led and managed school. All of this starts in the Foundation Stage, where the quality of provision is outstanding.

Using assessment information in planning and target setting is absolutely integral to the work of the school, and to its success. This and the robust checks made on teaching and learning result in highly effective teaching. Exemplary marking ensures pupils have a really good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The unique way in which the school groups its pupils for literacy and numeracy to allow what it calls 'precision teaching' to take place has rapidly accelerated pupils' progress in recent years. It led to the excellent results in the 2007 national tests. Standards seen in Year 6 are above average. The school is pressing hard to reach the ambitious targets it has set for 2008. It recognises that some pupils have moved on so fast this year that they need to be in a higher group, and has started to look at ways of dealing with this. At present the system is not flexible enough to allow movement between groups, usually because of the large numbers involved.

The school's unique approach to planning its curriculum very successfully takes each pupil on their own 'creative learning journey', promoting basic skills exceptionally well. It joins up pupils' learning and very successfully encourages them to pursue it in different ways. Pupils' behaviour is excellent, as are relationships throughout the school. The harmonious learning environment thus created ensures that pupils work and play free from harassment. The school's promotion of race equality is outstanding. The school has instilled in its pupils an excellent understanding of each other's faiths and cultures and of those beyond the school, bringing about a common understanding of how to live together amicably. This contributes greatly to the pupils' excellent contribution to the school and wider community.

The teamwork amongst staff, governors and pupils is almost tangible. The school has improved hugely since its previous inspection. It knows itself really well and is always looking for new ways to help pupils reach even greater heights. All of this gives it an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in the Foundation Stage. Carefully planned induction procedures make sure they settle quickly into school routines, gain in confidence and begin to interact properly with others. They make rapid progress in all areas of learning because the curriculum is exciting, providing them with many practical opportunities for learning indoors and out. It stimulates their curiosity, builds on their obvious desire to learn, and makes learning fun. Along with highly engaging teaching, it very successfully helps children to become independent and moves their considerably under-developed language skills on apace. The

consistent and thorough tracking of children's progress contributes to this because staff use the information gained from it very effectively in their planning.

Outstanding leadership and management in this age group ensure the staff get the best out of each child, as do the excellent relationships between staff and children. By the end of Reception, standards are as expected nationally in personal, social and emotional development and only slightly below this in the other areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find ways to adjust the groups pupils are in for precision teaching to ensure they take full account of the pupils' changing needs, particularly as their progress accelerates.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils throughout the school make excellent progress, resulting in the significantly above-average standards reached in last year's national tests for pupils in Year 6. Standards seen in Year 6 during the inspection were above average. The school is working very hard to help the pupils meet the very challenging targets set for this year. The high focus on language acquisition and development contributes to all of this, and enables pupils to reach average standards in Year 2.

Pupils learning English as an additional language readily grasp the opportunities given to them to think about and discuss their responses in their own language prior to giving their answers in English. This and the support they receive from the bilingual staff greatly helps their progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make major strides in their learning, several finding they no longer need the excellent support they receive from some very competent teaching assistants. A particular focus for this inspection was looking at the achievement of pupils entitled to free school meals. They make the same excellent progress as all other pupils because of the school's determination to help each pupil achieve their very best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The strong Christian ethos evident in the school very successfully ensures that pupils learn to value each other as equals, whatever their religion or cultural background. Attendance is good. Pupils' sheer enjoyment of school is evident in the way they throw themselves into their work. They say this is because, although their teachers give them hard work to do, they make it fun.

Pupils really appreciate how highly they and their views are valued. As playground leaders, lunchtime monitors, school councillors and office helpers, they contribute very effectively to the life of the school and to its management. They care for each other really well and know how to keep themselves and others safe. They sort out disputes themselves whenever possible but they also know when to tell an adult. They state confidently that staff deal with all issues quickly and effectively. Pupils also have a really good understanding of the concepts of healthy living, as shown in their healthy eating choices and the high level of participation in sporting activities. The pupils' excellent progress in learning and personal development ensures they are very well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers' expectations of what each child is capable of achieving are extremely high. Excellent assessment and recording procedures mean that teachers track pupils' progress meticulously and do everything possible to move it on. Lessons have a clear purpose. They are based very securely on the evidence teachers have about how well each pupil is doing. Teachers make full use of the expertise of their teaching assistants in this. They brief them well and meet at breaks and lunchtimes to check progress and determine what pupils should do next.

Teachers set challenging targets for each pupil and do all they can to help pupils reach those targets. Lessons move at a fast pace and capture pupils' interest. There is a sense of joy in learning throughout the school as the teachers and support staff transmit their obvious enthusiasm for their work to the pupils. Pupils' learning also benefits greatly from the high quality of marking, which almost always shows pupils the small steps they need to take to improve their work by themselves. Pupils report that this helps them to 'concentrate on one thing at a time' to get it right. This contributes greatly to their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school keeps its curriculum under constant review and adjusts it regularly and very effectively to meet the learning needs of pupils of all abilities. It has used a number of initiatives that have successfully accelerated learning in all age groups. Carefully thought through links between subjects are embedded in the 'Creative Learning Journey' programme through which pupils gain a love of learning, good research skills and the ability to learn by themselves. The curriculum also helps pupils to explore their feelings and relationships with each other, whatever their background or religion, and to understand their place in the wider world. The excellent range of extra-curricular clubs, activities, visits and visitors, all of which are very popular with the pupils, further enriches and enhances the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are highly committed to ensuring the best for the pupils, each of whom they know really well. Highly mindful of pupils' safety and well-being, the school ensures all staff and governors are up to date on safeguarding procedures and carry them out properly. The school has successfully improved pupils' attendance by reducing the number of extended holidays taken in term time, thereby adding to the pupils' chances of even greater success. Pupils who find learning difficult receive high quality support from the school and through its excellent links with external agencies. Academic guidance is exemplary and pupils are very clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do next. The school very successfully involves parents and carers in their children's learning, for example, through the well-attended family learning sessions. Parents very much appreciate what the school does for their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders and managers, including governors, are highly successful in focusing everyone on enabling each pupil to do as well as they possibly can. They share the headteacher's philosophy that 'leadership is not a position, it is a choice', and they carry out their roles exceptionally well. As a result, every aspect of the school's work is checked thoroughly to ensure the pupils' highest possible achievement. There really is, in words inspectors heard several times, 'nowhere to hide' in this school. All staff fully appreciate their contribution to how well pupils do in Year 6. As with pupils, staff are successfully encouraged to show initiative and contribute to the management of the school. Governors hold the school to account really well, attending review and strategy meetings with the leadership teams, and setting ambitious targets based on their excellent knowledge of what is happening in school.

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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

25 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Belgrave CE (C) Primary School, Sussex Place, Longton ST3 4TP

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school this week, and for talking to us about your work. You told us how much you like school and that you enjoy having hard work to do because your teachers make learning fun for you. This was certainly the case during our visit.

You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to an excellent school. Your teachers work very hard and clearly enjoy teaching you. They check your learning really carefully, and make sure that each one of you gets the right level of work to do. Because of this, your progress is outstanding and you reach standards that are well above those of other schools by the time you leave. Another thing the school does really well is that it helps you to understand each other's different cultures, religions and backgrounds, and how you are all equal and can work together. This is preparing you exceptionally well for when you grow up.

All of the above happens because the headteacher, governors and all staff take outstanding care of you and do everything possible to give you the best possible chance to succeed. The headteacher and governors run the school particularly well. You help with your exemplary behaviour, and through your work as school councillors, playground leaders and lunchtime monitors, and by making suggestions about how the school can improve.

We found only one slight weakness in what the school is doing. The way you are grouped for literacy and numeracy, and the excellent teaching you receive, has helped a number of you to make faster progress than your teachers initially thought. This means that you may now need to be grouped differently to maximise your learning. The school is looking at ways of doing this, and we have asked it to give the matter greater priority.

You can keep up your school's success by continuing to do your very best at all times. We hope you will enjoy learning throughout your lives as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely Doris Bell Lead inspector

Annex B

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Yours sincerely
Doris Bell
Lead inspector