

Ulverley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104078
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323958
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	430
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Quinney
Headteacher	Stephen Poole
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rodney Road Solihull B92 8RZ
Telephone number	01217 423251
Fax number	01217 436938

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ulverley is a large school situated on the outskirts of Solihull. The large majority of pupils come from the local area, and the rest from surrounding neighbourhoods. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion who do not speak English as their first language. The school has a full Early Years Foundation Stage provision for Nursery and Reception children. The Fun Factory, which offers provision for before- and after-school clubs, holiday clubs and pre-school, is based within the school grounds and is independently managed. The Lyndon Children's Centre is located within the school grounds and is also managed independently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ulverley is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. One parent reflected the views of many as follows: 'I have noticed a massive improvement at Ulverley over the last 12 months. The teachers are very enthusiastic and enjoy what they do. I have every confidence that the school will continue to get better and better.' Achievement has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. This is because a good system for monitoring, assessing and tracking the progress made by pupils is now in place and used by all staff. When a pupil is not making the expected progress, appropriate support is provided to put them back on track. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress as a result of the diligent care and support they receive from staff. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. As a result of the progress made and in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

There are still issues to tackle in the school, as the progress made by pupils from year to year is uneven. Children enter the school with skill levels generally in line with those expected for their age, although there is variability. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages by the end of Year 2, although writing is weaker than reading and mathematics. Overall, older pupils are now making good progress, but they are still catching up on their expected levels of attainment. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6, although improved, remain below average.

The good leadership of the headteacher, supported by the recently appointed senior team, has ensured that there is now a stronger sense of direction to the school's work. Its capacity to improve further is good. Leadership and management across the school remain satisfactory overall, as leadership roles and responsibilities have not yet been spread to all subject leaders. The school has a clear understanding of the main areas for development and its self-evaluation has been effective. However, school improvement planning lacks a clear focus on measurable outcomes, which are linked to raising standards.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now satisfactory overall. Many lessons observed during the inspection were good. However, the good quality teaching has not yet had time to impact fully on pupils' progress and some inconsistencies remain. For example, learning objectives are not always as clear as they could be and pupils are not always sure how well they have done at the end of a lesson. The curriculum is satisfactory and the pupils are given the opportunity to participate in a good range of enrichment activities. A key strength of the school is the effective way in which it promotes the personal development and well-being of pupils. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and parents agree. The pupils are polite, have positive attitudes to learning and are provided with many opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils benefit from good quality care and support. Academic guidance, including marking and the use of individual targets, is variable in its effectiveness. As a result, pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve their work. Attendance has improved and is now above national averages.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. On entering the Nursery, children are closely observed and monitored so that activities are provided which build positively on what they know and can do. These good quality observations continue as children move through Reception. As a result, children achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Relationships between adults and children are excellent. Children enjoy the interesting activities provided, both in the adult-directed sessions and the independent child-chosen activities, such as working in the role-play bakery area. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop the language skills of children taking part in independently chosen activities. Children contribute to planning by saying what they want to learn about the topics. This has resulted in raised achievement, particularly for boys, who had previously lagged behind girls in aspects of communication, language and literacy. Children show outstanding levels of personal development. They play together very well, with even the youngest children talking about and actively sharing equipment. Children are very proud of their work. Links with parents and other Early Year Foundation Stage providers, including separate provision within the school and the nearby Children's Centre, are very good. This has had a positive effect on moving the children forward in their learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. The manager and her team work very well together.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- Ensure that all lessons have clear learning objectives.
- Ensure that all management activities, including school improvement planning, have measurable outcomes that are clearly linked to raising standards.
- Ensure all pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

A small proportion of the 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 and by the end of Year 6 and standards are close to national expectations. Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Satisfactory progress is made through Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, standards are in line with national expectations in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are not quite as strong because of limited opportunities to practise extended writing skills.

A legacy of previously inconsistent progress means that some pupils, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, are still not achieving as well as they should. However, this gap is narrowing rapidly and the school's data now show an improving picture of the progress being made across this key stage. There is strong evidence that pupils are responding to better quality teaching. However, inconsistent and slower progress in the past is still having a detrimental effect on test results, as pupils have to catch up and fill the gaps in their learning. Good monitoring

systems ensure pupils' achievement is tracked robustly, and this is having a positive impact on progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons and this is reflected in good attendance. They are keen to learn and form positive relationships with adults and other pupils. They are polite and friendly. Pupils understand what they need to do to keep safe and say they feel secure in school. Behaviour is satisfactory and the school encourages pupils to discuss any problems that might arise. Pupils take responsibility in, and contribute to, the school and wider community. This is seen through the effective work of the school council and pupils' involvement in activities such as concerts and fundraising for national and local charities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and this leads pupils to consider fully the needs of others. The school provides opportunities to experience the cultures of other countries through lessons, festivals and links with a Rwandan school. Pupils have a good understanding of the choices required to live healthy and safe lives. They know the value of a healthy diet, regular exercise and drinking water. Pupils eagerly take part in a number of sporting activities and enjoy the exciting opportunities linked to the Forest School. Pupils' satisfactory progress in developing their basic skills means that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good, with work that is very interesting and well matched to children's needs. In good lessons in the rest of school, teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations, both in terms of behaviour and academic work. Pupils respond well in these lessons and generally make good progress. Teachers have good relationships with pupils in all lessons. In a small number of lessons, work is not always matched accurately to the needs of pupils. On occasion, basic skills are not fully developed because of the overuse of worksheets. Some children have difficulty in understanding what they are expected to learn because they do not clearly understand lesson objectives. Teachers' marking of work is positive. In the best examples, it is used consistently to challenge pupils and move them on in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There has been a strong emphasis on improving standards in literacy and numeracy since the last inspection. There are some good examples of using other subjects to develop these skills, but this is not consistent across the school. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through a wide range of additional activities. Pupils benefit greatly from the Forest School initiative. A good range of visits out, including residential trips to many places such as York, have had a positive impact on academic and social development. A link with Rwanda develops pupils' understanding of life in other countries. Extra-curricular clubs, including sport and homework clubs, add to the pupils' social and academic development. There is a strong emphasis on developing physical activities and healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in a happy learning environment. Systems to safeguard their health, safety and well-being meet current government requirements. Child protection procedures are clear. Relationships are strong and pupils feel safe and secure in school. The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the care given to their children and with the support that the school offers. Links with other professionals such as educational psychologists are good and provide valuable support for pupils when required. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school collects and makes effective use of data about pupils' progress to plan provision to meet individual pupils' needs, although not all pupils have a clear understanding of their targets to help steer their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by capable teaching assistants who work closely with these pupils to ensure that they make expected progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher was appointed in April 2008 and his leadership is having a positive impact on moving the school forward. With good support from the local authority, the senior team now have a much stronger capacity to make the necessary improvements. This is illustrated by their record of acting on the issues raised at the last inspection. It is now evident that there is a stronger sense of direction and purpose. More staff are becoming involved in the evaluation of the school's provision, although there is still work to be done with subject leaders.

Governance is a strength and is good. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Those responsible for leading the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are impressive and increasingly taking on more accountability for achievement and standards in their individual subject areas. Outside professionals associated with the school hold it in high regard. They acknowledge the beneficial links the school has made with the local community. This has contributed to good community cohesion. Parents are full of praise for the school and the way it develops happy and confident young people. One parent commented, 'The fact that my children are upset when they can't go to school is testament to how successful the school has become.'

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

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

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ulverley School, Solihull, B92 8RZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know what we thought about your school and how it could improve.

- You go to a school that has improved a lot recently and is now satisfactory.
- You are making much better progress than you did a year ago.
- You and your teachers know how well you are doing and give you the right sort of help so you don't get behind in your work.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.
- Your school council are good ambassadors for the school.
- You all look smart in your school uniform, particularly Year 6.
- You are polite and considerate young people.

In order to make your school even better, I have suggested that your headteacher and other teachers do the following things:

- ensure that you do as well as you can in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups
- ensure that you all understand what you are going to learn in lessons
- ensure that your school leaders develop clear plans so you make as much progress as you can
- ensure you all know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.

Yours faithfully

Marian Harker

Her Majesty's Inspector