

Morton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112596
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325642
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Pat Walsh 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	80
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	Mr Clive Lawton
Headteacher	Mrs Evelyn Charles
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Main Road Morton Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 6HH
Telephone number	01773 872360
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils in this small school are from White British backgrounds and come from the local village and surrounding area. There is a Reception class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion claiming free school meals, although increased recently, is very low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is similar to that expected for children of this age. Almost all year groups, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught in mixed-aged classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. The headteacher's good leadership skills, ably supported by the senior teacher, have resulted in improving standards and the pupils' good personal development. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a confident staff team; this has resulted in a shared commitment to improve pupils' satisfactory achievement. All groups make satisfactory progress from starting points similar to others of their age and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The school has identified writing as a weakness and has begun to successfully tackle pupils' underachievement. The indications are that the measures introduced, such as the 'Big Write', are significantly improving pupils' skills in this area.

The majority of parents are happy with the school and recognise the recent improvements. One parent commented, 'This is a happy school, I have seen the changes and we are pleased with the progress our child is making'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are a strength of the school. They behave well and have good attitudes towards learning. They are well cared for and know that adults are keen to offer help and support. Pupils show a good awareness of issues related to healthy lifestyles and enjoy their involvement in sports activities. They feel safe in school and report that bullying is not a problem.

The school's focus on improving pupils' learning has resulted in better teaching in all classes. An increasing number of lessons are good; the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall because the best practice is not yet consistently seen in all classes. Positive relationships are evident in lessons and pupils work well with adults and with each other. They have responded well to changes in the satisfactory curriculum, where teachers have started to make stronger links between English and other subjects. However, the planning for and implementation of these links is not yet consistent. Pupils' work seen during the inspection demonstrates that they are given too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solving everyday problems. Furthermore, the work planned for more able pupils does not always challenge their thinking and accelerate their learning consistently.

The headteacher has successfully led the school through unsettled times characterised by changes to staffing and governors. Leaders have a clear and accurate view of the reasons why some key areas still need improving. The resulting actions to make improvements, although still in their early stages, are showing definite signs of impact, for example in pupils' writing and the better standard of teaching. The pace of change and the effectiveness of its actions so far confirm the school's view that it has good capacity to improve. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is satisfactory overall, and at times good, in the Reception class. By the end of the Reception year, most children reach the expected learning goals. Teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons that children find interesting and that are generally matched well to their abilities and needs. However, at times the children sit for too long listening to the teacher and their progress slows. At other times there is too little challenge for the most able in the teachers' questioning. The effective links in learning, for example through the topic on growing, have

boosted children's skills in writing. Children's personal development and welfare are good, which enables them to be active learners and develop confidence and independence. They eagerly choose from the wide range of activities, both inside and outside. They play happily together and learn to share and to make choices. The classroom is attractive and stimulating and the outside learning area provides a satisfactory range of activities. The school has good links with parents, who are secure in the knowledge that their children's welfare is given a high priority and is of good quality. The shared leadership is satisfactory but does not always lead to a common approach to teaching and the curriculum. The assessment of children's progress is thorough and planning is generally effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by planning activities that give them opportunities to solve problems and apply their learning.
- Provide high challenge in lessons for the more able pupils through work that engages their interest and challenges their thinking.
- Further develop the curriculum so that it will broaden pupils' experience, and extend key skills in all subjects.

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

When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skill levels are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average overall. Evidence from lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work, and the school's assessment information indicates that standards in all year groups are rising, notably in writing. An effective system for tracking pupils' progress in all classes has already improved achievement but there is still some work to do to overcome previous underachievement. The gap between the progress made by girls and boys is narrowing as a result of the measures introduced by the school to better engage boys in their learning. The support for the very few pupils with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and as a result these pupils make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they like coming to school because they feel safe and enjoy being with their friends. Their attendance and punctuality are good. They are polite, have positive attitudes to their learning and behave well in lessons. In lessons they work sensibly in pairs and groups and share ideas enthusiastically with a 'talk partner'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall; however, their understanding of other cultures is underdeveloped. The school council provides pupils with good opportunities to represent the views of others, for instance improvements to playtimes. Pupils also contribute to the wider community through raising funds for local and national charities. Older pupils are keen to carry out duties such as playground leaders, and are helpful towards the younger pupils during break times. Pupils' growing confidence and their improving literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons in all years are carefully structured with a clear purpose. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and lessons are calm and orderly. All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and active involvement, so discussions are usually lively and thoughtful. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to support and enliven learning but do not always engage pupils in using them. Activities are well organised and resources are readily available. However, tasks do not always match the abilities or needs of the most able pupils closely enough and as a result, some pupils become restive, lose concentration and do not achieve as well as they could. Where learning is good, there is a brisk pace and stimulating activities excite pupils' interest. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils were totally absorbed in designing and building their 'Iron Man' sculptures from recycled materials. Teachers use marking effectively and pupils are beginning to be involved in checking their own learning to help them improve their work further. The targets set for pupils are helping them to improve their work, most notably in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory balance between subjects. The focus on developing pupils' writing skills reflects the school's recent priorities. The school recognises that there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills in lessons. The recent work to plan literacy across other subjects has proved successful in engaging pupils in their learning and has inspired teachers to introduce more themed topics to develop pupils' learning. However, planning for this approach is in the early stages and lacks a consistent approach. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. The recent emphasis on improving pupils' personal, social and health education has resulted in consistently good behaviour. The school makes effective use of visits, including residential trips and visitors to enrich pupils' experiences and extend their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The caring ethos provides a strong foundation for the school's work and gives rise to good relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst the pupils. Staff in this small school know the pupils very well and the parents appreciate the warm family atmosphere. Academic guidance has recently improved through the systematic tracking of pupils' progress and setting targets for them. The school is monitoring the progress of individual pupils more rigorously and using the information to identify underachievement and give carefully tailored support. This has yet to fully extend to the more able pupils. Arrangements to safeguard and protect pupils meet government requirements. Individual education plans are used effectively to plan suitable work for the small number of pupils who need them. Induction arrangements are successful in settling pupils happily into school and good links exist with local schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership and has brought about many changes which have had a positive impact on the staff, pupils, parents and governors. This has been achieved through clear consistent messages to all, high expectations of staff and pupils, and ambitious targets to raise standards. Accurate evaluation of the school's weaknesses by the headteacher and the leadership team and the action they have taken has led to a clear upward trend. In recent times the systematic evaluation of teaching has slowed due to the headteacher's full-time teaching commitment. Subject leaders are more effective in identifying areas for improvement in their subjects and in planning action to remedy weaknesses.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors, including those new to the post, have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are supportive and increasingly offer the necessary challenge to hold the school to account. There are plans in place to increase their monitoring role through a programme of regular visits and feedback. The school has developing links with the local community and this has aided satisfactory community cohesion. There is a recognition that the school now needs to strengthen pupils' global awareness.

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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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	2
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 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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

8 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Morton Primary School, Alfreton, DE55 6HH

Thank you very much for the way you welcomed me to your school when I visited this week. Thank you especially to the school council and the children I sat with at lunchtime. I enjoyed our conversations very much. It is clear that you like being part of a small school where everyone gets on well together.

I thought you'd like to know what I found out about your school. You behave well and are good at looking after yourselves and other children. You make satisfactory progress and your writing has improved this year. However, you could do better, so I've asked your teachers to make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for you to practise your number work by solving problems in lessons. I have also asked them to make sure that those of you who can do harder work have interesting challenges. The headteacher knows what needs to be done to make the school better and is working hard with your teachers and the governors to make sure this happens. Your teachers will be trying to make lessons more interesting for you by planning more of the topics that you are so interested in. You have targets for your work and they are beginning to help you improve.

You can help by working as hard as you can and continuing to behave well.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pat Walsh

Her Majesty's Inspector