

Crackley Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124108
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328056
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth 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)	174
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	Hilda Johnson
Headteacher	Sara Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackthorn Place Newcastle ST5 7BE
Telephone number	01782 561760
Fax number	01782

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This smaller than average size primary school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS), including 'stay and play,' and a breakfast club managed by the governing body. The school serves an area of high social disadvantage and the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free meals is well above average. Children start school with skills and knowledge levels well below those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Crackley Bank is a satisfactory school. The principled leadership of the headteacher provides a steady steer resulting in improvements since its previous inspection to the school's climate and ethos. Most pupils acquire good attitudes to school and behave well within a caring and encouraging climate for learning, but a few have poor attendance and this has a major impact on their learning. It is clear that the school knows itself soundly and it has a sensible set of priorities with a coherent plan for its future improvement. Satisfactory systems are in place to ensure that priorities are tackled properly and that the results of any actions taken are appropriately evaluated. Although standards are well below average, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are of variable quality. Some are well planned and teachers maintain a good pace. Nevertheless, there is not enough good teaching to accelerate pupils' progress to the point where they reach higher standards, particularly in Years 1 to 4. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, teachers do not make it clear enough to the pupils what it is they want them to learn. Although all lessons seen had a learning objective, these varied in their precision, with pupils not always fully understanding what it is they were learning. The school is making increasingly effective use of the information it gathers about the pupils' performance in tests and other assessments. However, the information recorded is not always easy to follow and teachers do not always use it to plan subsequent lessons. As a result, work is sometimes insufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able pupils. The effective quality of care provided by staff has a positive impact on the pupils' good personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, as does the broad curriculum. Pupils are learning a wide range of social skills that are helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. However, there are limited opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of other cultures and beliefs in Great Britain today. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and appreciate how their actions can affect others. They respond maturely to opportunities to take responsibility and make a valuable contribution to their school and the local community. The school council helps to develop their independence, awareness of citizenship, representing the views of others, and having a say in the life of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are well below the levels typical for their age, particularly in communication skills. The school works hard with its partners to improve these quickly and to involve parents more in their children's education. Children's personal and social development is given a high priority by all staff and the children make good progress in developing these important skills. They make satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning but still enter Year 1 with skill levels that are well below average. Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They know how to take turns when sharing resources such as the computer, and they handle books and equipment with care and respect. Children show interest and generally concentrate for increasing amounts of time when working in a group with an adult or when working at a task on their own. Satisfactory leadership ensures that the work is planned satisfactorily, which ensures that children have appropriate experiences. However, insufficient use is made of the outdoor and imaginative play area, as it does not yet support all six areas of learning as well as it should. This slows the rate at which skills can

improve. Parents are kept well informed through clear ongoing records of their child's experiences and achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good teaching across the school to accelerate pupils' progress, ensuring it is sufficiently challenging for all pupils.
- Raise standards across the school, and in particular in Years 1 to 4, ensuring good use is made of information from assessments.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve the planning for the six areas of learning in the EYFS, and especially the use made of outdoor and imaginative play areas.

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

The satisfactory progress that children make in the EYFS is broadly maintained through the rest of the school, although it slows in lower Key Stage 2. Standards are below average. The main reason that progress is satisfactory rather than at least good is that pupils are not consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging. This is particularly the case for pupils in Years 1 to 4. Pupils' speaking and listening skills, and their ability to write accurately in different styles, are weaker aspects of pupils' performance through the school in English. In mathematics, the school has introduced a variety of strategies to improve pupils' skills in calculation and quick mental recall. It is too early to evaluate whether these are proving successful. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the extra support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Training provided for all staff in developing pupils' emotional intelligence, for example, through a specialist programme, is doing much to raise pupils' self-esteem and develop their relationships. As a result, behaviour has improved and is now good, although incidents of challenging behaviour do occasionally occur. Pupils are keen to take up additional responsibilities and in so doing make a positive contribution to the school community. Attendance is well below average and adversely affects the achievement of a number of pupils. In particular, the practice of pupils taking holidays in term time is reducing the chances of some pupils attaining higher standards. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well and talk enthusiastically about the need to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe, as is shown in the responsible way they move in and around school. Pupils are prepared soundly for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good humour where the pupils settle quickly and eagerly to the tasks ahead. Pupils are keen to learn and show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their activities. They collaborate well and are willing to help others when they come across difficulties. Some pupils show challenging behaviour but they are usually managed well to minimise disruption to the learning of other pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and so are able to explain new ideas in a clear manner. In some lessons, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, the pace of learning is too slow; pupils lose interest and time is lost with teachers controlling chatter and activities not effectively stretching pupils of different abilities. Consequently, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils are developing their skills in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing and how to improve, but this is at an early stage in some classes. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A good range of enrichment activities effectively extends the curriculum. These include extra-curricular activities, such as football, cookery and crafts clubs. There are good opportunities to work with visitors, including poets, a sculptor and a storyteller, to widen pupils' experiences. Good links with others, such as professional sports coaches and staff from the local high school, help promote pupils' skills across a variety of aspects. The school holds termly enrichment afternoons that are aimed at providing pupils with skills for life. Pupils say they enjoy choosing from several activities that include gardening, sewing and cookery. Curriculum planning is not always focused enough to ensure that activities provided for pupils challenge them all sufficiently. As a result, progress is inconsistent across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care is central to the school's ethos. Pupils feel they can go to an adult for help when they are worried and that teachers listen to their concerns. The provision to protect the pupils' health and safety is good and robust child protection procedures are in place. Pupils are well cared for, particularly those pupils who are vulnerable. Procedures for monitoring and supporting the academic progress of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, are sound. Intervention programmes to support pupils' progress are helpful and the school works very well with several outside agencies to cater for the needs of pupils requiring extra support in order to enhance their learning. There are some good examples of teachers giving pupils regular feedback through their marking, providing clear explanations and ideas on how to improve their work, but this is not consistently done in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The upward trend in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 is the result of key changes made by the headteacher following her appointment in November 2005. She has raised the ambitions of staff, pupils and parents and established close teamwork and cooperation. Teaching and learning are monitored, supported and developed, with a range of appropriate strategies put in place. These are beginning to have a positive impact, as seen in the improving standards at the end of Year 6. However, leaders have not yet been successful in ensuring the consistency of teaching throughout the school. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Training has played an important role in improving the management role of key team leaders, who now have much more delegated responsibility. The work of the governing body is good; governors are supportive, know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and challenge the school's work in priority areas. The school works well with its local community and meets its needs effectively; nevertheless its grasp of national and global issues in order to further promote community cohesion is less well developed.

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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	3

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?	2
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	4
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	4
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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	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**

2 October 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Crackley Bank Primary School, Newcastle, ST5 7BE
Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. We thought you would like to know what we have said about your school. We know that you are proud of your school and enjoy being there. We found that Crackley Bank is a satisfactory school with some strengths. Most of you behave well and learn to be kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, we think you try to listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you. The school council works hard for you. We have asked the headteacher and the staff to do a number of things to make your school even better. We know that your teachers look after you well and listen to what you have to say. They work hard to help you learn. We have asked the school to ensure that everyone is given work of the right level of difficulty, especially for those of you who find learning easy. Sometimes, the work is too easy so you do not learn as much as you should. We also think that, in Years 1 to 4, standards could be higher in English, mathematics and science, so we have asked that teachers help you to make faster progress. To help with this, more lessons should be really interesting and everyone should aim to produce high quality work. We have asked for better planning for work with the youngest children in the school, especially the way outdoor and imaginative play areas are used. We would like you all to make sure that when you complete work it is the very best it can be. We want the school to seek to improve attendance. You can also help by making sure that you come to school every day. We wish you well in the future. Yours sincerely Jacqueline
Wordsworth Her Majesty's Inspector