

Knutton St Mary's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133993
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328796
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	241
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	Susan Newman
Headteacher	Janet Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Lane Knutton Newcastle ST5 6EB
Telephone number	01782 297337
Fax number	01782 297337

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in Nursery and Reception classes. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are White British, though a few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School status and Effective Early Learning accreditation.

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 school. It provides a very caring and friendly setting in which to learn. The vast majority of parents support the school and two parental comments are typical of many: 'My child loves coming to school and learning. She is in a safe and secure environment where she is taught with respect' and 'Both my boys enjoy school and I feel teachers look for interesting ways to engage children. The school is a happy place with a family feel.'

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults provide opportunities that effectively cater for their different abilities. The progress that pupils make throughout the rest of the school is satisfactory overall. Although standards are well below average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6, this represents satisfactory achievement from pupils' low skill and ability levels on starting school. The main reason that pupils make satisfactory, rather than good, progress is the inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. At times, some teachers do not use information about pupils' attainment to set work that effectively challenges them, and this hinders the progress they make. Too few pupils reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. This stems from teachers not having high enough expectations of what more able pupils can achieve and results in these pupils being given work that is too easy. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and are keen to do well. Relationships are good, with pupils working well together in pairs and small groups. As a result, classrooms are calm and happy places in which to learn.

Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the leadership of the headteacher is good. She provides a clear vision for school improvement and has forged a strong sense of teamwork among all those involved in the life of the school. Accurate self-evaluation correctly identifies priority areas for development, including improving the consistency of teaching and learning and accelerating pupils' progress. Leaders ensure that the pastoral needs of the high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effectively met. They are not as adept at meeting these pupils' academic needs. Leaders do not sufficiently evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this academic provision and so are not in a position to judge how it could be effectively developed. For instance, the impact of strategies introduced to improve these pupils' progress is not assessed thoroughly enough to see if they are proving successful.

Pupils behave well and show enjoyment in coming to school. They are adopting healthy lifestyles well and have a good understanding of the need to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. They also show a good awareness of how to stay safe, such as in the way they move responsibly in and around school. A wide range of enrichment activities adds further interest to the satisfactory curriculum. These include after-school clubs and opportunities for pupils to work with a variety of visitors, such as artists and musicians, to extend their skills further. The pastoral care and support of pupils is a strength of the school and is much appreciated by parents. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. All staff are fully committed to ensuring the health and well-being of pupils while in their care.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter school with skills and abilities that are low for their age, particularly in terms of their personal, social and emotional development. Adults place strong emphasis on developing this aspect of learning and are very successful in raising children's confidence and self-esteem. Children make good progress and achieve well across the areas of learning because of consistently good quality teaching and learning, although standards are still well below average on entering Year 1. Adults plan activities that effectively meet the needs of children of different abilities and the pace of learning is good. The effective balance of activities directed by adults and those chosen by children makes a positive contribution to their development as independent learners. Children settle quickly into everyday routines, behave well and show much enjoyment in their activities. This was evident in the role play area when they were talking excitably about the dinosaurs that were 'hatching' from eggs they had been incubating over recent days. Good leadership has rightly identified the need to improve outdoor provision, by planning a wider range of activities for children to choose from, in each of the areas of learning. Good quality care and effective promotion of children's well-being result in them feeling happy and safe and trusting the adults who look after them. Effective partnerships with parents have been forged through home visits and good induction procedures.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring teachers consistently use assessment information to set effectively challenging work.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve.
- Develop the leadership and management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to meet their academic needs more effectively.

A small proportion of 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

Although standards are well below average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, they have been gradually rising in recent years. This stems from the increased emphasis placed on developing pupils' phonic skills to improve their ability to link letters and sounds. This, in turn, has increased their confidence in reading, writing and speaking and is shown in their improved oral and written presentational skills. The first of these pupils to experience this greater emphasis are now in Year 3, and this year group is doing better than those in previous years. However, leaders rightly acknowledge that, if standards are to rise by the end of Year 6, the rate of pupils' progress needs to accelerate and be consistent throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and respect others' points of view. They are polite, considerate and work well together, which makes a positive contribution to the friendly atmosphere evident throughout the school. Pupils take on responsibilities readily, such as being a member of the school council. This enables pupils to express their views and to bring about improvements and, in so doing, make a good contribution to the life of the school. They also contribute well to the wider community through close links with the church and by raising funds for local charities. Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' cultural development by raising their awareness of life in a culturally diverse modern Britain. Pupils gain literacy and numeracy skills in a satisfactory manner and are suitably prepared for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils show enthusiasm in their activities and say they enjoy their learning. They are interested in listening to the views of other pupils and are keen to help each other. Teachers plan activities that build well on previous work. This enables pupils to use what they already know and understand to support their current learning. However, some teachers do not consistently set work that effectively challenges pupils of different abilities and this hinders their progress. The expectation of what more able pupils can achieve is not high enough and means too few of these pupils attain the standards of which they are capable. Marking is not used consistently as a means of showing pupils how to improve their work. Staff use praise well to celebrate pupils' achievements and, in so doing, raise learners' self-esteem and confidence. Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide sound support for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is extended by a good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, including athletics and tag rugby. Visits to places of educational interest, such as Gladstone Pottery Museum and a local garden centre, help bring the curriculum to life and broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils say they particularly look forward to the residential stay in Year 6. This experience is specifically designed to promote pupils' independence, confidence and self-esteem and also provides opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth. Curriculum planning is not consistent in ensuring pupils of different abilities are provided with appropriately challenging work. The programme for personal and social development makes a positive contribution to this aspect of pupils' learning. It provides opportunities for pupils to work with the school nurse and other health professionals and visit the Life Centre caravan to foster their understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Thorough child protection procedures mean that all staff understand the steps to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Risk assessments are in place for activities in and around school and for visits to ensure pupils' safety. Good links with outside agencies, such as the speech and language service and education welfare officer, mean extra help is available for individual pupils, as required. Leaders have worked hard to successfully improve attendance since the last inspection. However, despite their best efforts, a small minority of parents do not send their children to school regularly enough and this hinders their progress. The procedures for checking the progress that pupils make are satisfactory. Guidance for pupils to evaluate for themselves how they might improve is at an early stage of development and therefore its impact is currently limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders at all levels carry out their individual and collective responsibilities diligently. The good team ethos means all staff feel they have an important part to play in how the school develops. Performance management has been improved since the last inspection and now more effectively links individual training needs to whole-school priorities. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not evaluated rigorously enough to give a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in this aspect of the school's performance. Community cohesion is promoted in a satisfactory way, especially within the school and local community where everyone is treated equally and fairly. Leaders are now seeking to improve this aspect by raising pupils' awareness of life within a culturally diverse modern Britain. Governors support the school well and are keen to develop their role to more effectively evaluate its performance and influence its development. The school's recent track record shows it has satisfactory capacity to make any necessary changes.

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?	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?	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?	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	3
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	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**

26 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Knutton St Mary's Primary School, Knutton, ST5 6EB

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the interesting things you do. Your school is satisfactory. It helps you make satisfactory progress, though standards are not as good as they could be at the end of Year 6.

What we found about your school.

- It is a friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- You enjoy coming to school and behave well.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe in and around school and on visits.
- The after-school clubs and a wide range of visits and visitors add further interest to what you learn at school.
- You show a good understanding of how to live healthily and stay safe.
- Your headteacher and teachers are working hard to help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Help you learn at a faster rate by giving you work that always makes you think hard.
- Have higher expectations of what those of you who find work easy can achieve.
- Improve the way it checks that those of you who sometimes find it difficult to learn do as well as you can.

You can all help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities and being kind and considerate to others.

Yours faithfully

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector