

# Squirrel Hayes First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124062
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	329665
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Watters HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	158
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Harper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Erica Jane Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 November 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Springfield Road Biddulph Stoke-on-Trent ST8 7DF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 297886
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 297946

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), and one Additional Inspector. When Squirrel Hayes First School was inspected in November 2006, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently HMI visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress in improving the quality of education. At the last monitoring inspection in July 2008, the school was judged to have made satisfactory progress in tackling its key areas for improvement.

## Description of the school

The school is in a socially disadvantaged area of Biddulph, to the north west of Stoke-on-Trent. Thirty six per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is more than double the national average. The proportion of pupils who are on the school's register of special educational needs is slightly above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is located in the Nursery and Reception classes.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The headteacher, governors and staff have been successful in raising expectations and ensuring higher aspirations for the whole school community. There is a clear sense of educational direction and purpose, striving for higher academic achievement whilst at the same time ensuring that the pastoral care and welfare of the pupils remain a priority. The school's overall effectiveness and capacity to improve are satisfactory.

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The gap between the levels pupils should be reaching for their age and what they are currently attaining is narrowing. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, although rates of progress between year groups and subjects are variable. For example, during the last academic year, progress in mathematics in Year 3 was inadequate and progress in writing in Year 2 is currently too slow. The higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently well in lessons and their rate of progress is sometimes slower than it might be.

The quality of education in the EYFS is satisfactory and most children make satisfactory progress. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. There are positive links with two local churches, encouraging pupils to see the value of faith communities, in developing social well-being and tolerance. There are plans to develop and extend further the pupils' understanding of cultures and ethnic groups different from their own.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well, are good humoured, and have very positive attitudes. They enjoy their work and relationships with adults are good. Attendance is slightly below the national average for primary schools. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. While some teaching is good, there are occasions when weaknesses impede the pupils' progress, for example when the pupils' work is either too easy or too difficult.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are opportunities to teach literacy and numeracy in other subjects, and this is making a satisfactory, although not consistent, contribution to raising standards. The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Pastoral care is good, ensuring pupils are well looked after. Vulnerable pupils, including those at risk and a looked after child, receive good quality support from the school. Academic guidance is less effective, particularly in terms of the quality of teachers' marking which ranges from good to unsatisfactory.

The views of parents are sought through conversations about their children's progress and questionnaires. Nearly all parents who responded to a questionnaire in July this year were overwhelmingly positive in their support of the school. Comments included 'my child is happy and likes coming to school...there is a friendly atmosphere...the staff are extremely approachable and go out of their way to support the children'. The school has also acted on parents' suggestions, such as introducing home school 'link' books to improve parents' involvement in their children's studies and sharing pupils' academic and personal targets.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher sets clear direction for all staff and has made a positive impact since joining the school in January 2008. Systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress are secure and generally rigorous. However, the self-evaluations carried out by the headteacher and other senior teachers are not always

supported well enough by the school's evidence, particularly in relation to the impact of initiatives in raising achievement and improving teaching and learning. Since the last inspection effective steps have been taken to promote improvement, move the school forward and eliminate the most significant weaknesses. The school's recovery from special measures is the first step on the journey to ensuring a consistently good and better quality of education for all pupils.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

The children in the EYFS receive a satisfactory quality of education in a caring and supportive environment. When children enter the Nursery class, their attainment is generally below what is expected for their age, particularly in their personal and social development, in speaking, listening, reading and writing, and in their mathematical development. They make satisfactory progress overall, with achievement increasing in the Reception class. By the time they enter Year 1, many children have acquired the skills and knowledge expected for their age, although some still have a way to go. The children's personal development and well-being are good. Children behave well, mostly sharing and cooperating sensibly. Relationships between teachers and children are good, and children clearly enjoy and benefit from this secure and harmonious atmosphere. Teachers and other adults make sure children are safe and regular assessments ensure a watchful eye is kept on children's welfare and happiness. The EYFS is led and managed satisfactorily. Recent curriculum reviews and new arrangements for tracking children's progress give the EYFS a secure basis for further development and improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards, making sure rates of progress are at least satisfactory and increasingly good for all groups of pupils, particularly the more able.
- Ensure the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good or better, and that the pupils' work is always matched well to their different learning needs.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by all senior staff, making sure that the impact of initiatives is checked rigorously against a secure and robust evidence base.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall performance 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**

Standards are rising and pupils' progress is accelerating. In the last year the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age has increased from 36% to 62%. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and an increasing number of pupils are achieving well. The progress made by the pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally satisfactory, with some vulnerable pupils making good progress. However, a significant minority of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs do not achieve well enough. Similarly, the higher attaining pupils, who are currently in Year 4, made inadequate progress in mathematics during their time in Year 3. The school's provisional results in the 2008 national assessments for pupils in Year 2 show that standards are generally in line with the national average in reading and writing, and slightly below in mathematics. This reflects a steady upward trend in improvement and the first time in five years that the school's results have not been significantly below the national average. Pupils' achievement during the

autumn term 2008, reflected in their written work, is at least satisfactory in most year groups, except in Year 4 where it is good and in Year 2 where it is too slow.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils behave well and are polite, showing care and consideration for others. They enjoy coming to school and work well together in pairs and small groups. This shows a good improvement from their low personal and social skills on starting school. They willingly take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council or a play leader. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities, showing initiative and a growing maturity. They make a positive contribution to the school community and their voice is increasingly influential, for example the school introduced a wider range of after school clubs after pupils requested them. Pupils also contribute well to the wider community by taking part in local events, such as switching on the Biddulph Christmas Lights, and raising funds for charities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, with the moral and social aspects being particularly strong. Pupils' awareness of life in a culturally diverse Britain is not as well developed. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well and talk sensibly about the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe and move responsibly around the school and in the playground during break times. They are developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy in a satisfactory way and are soundly prepared for the next stage in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is mostly satisfactory, with some that is good and a small minority which is inadequate. In nearly all lessons teaching promotes positive behaviour and attitudes. The best teaching occurs when expectations are high, pupils' work is interesting and challenging, and questions are used effectively to probe the pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils learn new skills and knowledge at a brisk pace, and accurate assessments enable teachers to identify gaps in the pupils' learning. Similarly, teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils who find learning difficult. In weaker lessons, the pupils' work is not matched well enough to their different learning needs and capabilities. Because of this the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and the work for the lower ability pupils is too difficult. This is also reflected in teachers' planning, particularly in the afternoon curriculum, for example when applying literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The quality of teachers' marking is generally adequate, although variable. The best marking occurs when pupils receive precise guidance to help them improve, which is followed up carefully. However, a small minority of the pupils' work is unmarked and, on other occasions, errors are repeated without being checked sufficiently rigorously by the teacher.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is extended by a good range of enrichment activities, including after school clubs for art, pottery and golf. Educational visits are used well to enhance pupils' learning experiences, for example trips to Ironbridge gorge and the Manchester Science Museum. Visitors

to school, such as an African drummer, further widen their experiences. Year 3 pupils go on a residential visit to an outdoor education centre each year, and this makes a valuable contribution to their personal and social development. The links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches, also make a positive contribution to pupils staying healthy. Curriculum planning has been improved and is satisfactory. This is helping teachers build more effectively on what pupils know, understand and can do, although this is not a consistent feature in all year groups. The afternoon lessons are being made more interesting by enabling pupils to use skills learned in one subject to support their learning in other subjects. This is at an early stage of development and not firmly embedded. The programme for personal development helps pupils understand effectively the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. The pastoral care of pupils is good and supports their good personal development. Teachers and other adults understand the school's rigorous child protection arrangements and know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about children's well-being. Risk assessments are securely in place for activities in and around school and on educational visits. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and know they can talk to a member of staff if they have any worries. There are sound links with outside agencies which ensure extra support for individual pupils is available when required. However, despite the school's best efforts, some links with local authority social services are not as strong as they should be. Academic guidance is satisfactory. An improved system for tracking pupils' progress has recently been introduced and this ensures that teachers have a clearer understanding about the rates of progress made by individual pupils. Teachers are developing their expertise in using the information gained to set targets that are generally challenging for pupils of different abilities. Marking is not used consistently to guide pupils to improve the quality of their work, and is variable in quality.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of collective leadership and management, including governors and subject leaders, is satisfactory. The headteacher has high expectations, ensuring a rigorous focus on raising achievement and standards. Weaknesses in the school's management have been eliminated. The headteacher's drive and enthusiasm have refocused the school community on its core purpose, to ensure the well-being of all pupils and that they achieve their very best. This ensures a sound base for further improvement. The role of subject leaders is developing satisfactorily. The leaders take an active and increasingly influential part in monitoring the school's work and subject action plans identify strengths and areas for improvement. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is led and managed well by a special educational needs teaching assistant, with the support of the headteacher. Strategic planning is secure, although it is not always clear how the success of various initiatives will be measured and evaluated. While self-evaluation is satisfactory, and improvement is accelerating, the school's view of its overall performance is too generous and not supported sufficiently by the available evidence. The role of the governing body in keeping a watchful eye on the school is improving. Governors' committees meet regularly to hold the school to account for raising standards. The

chair of governors is a valued and supportive critical friend and provides sound leadership to the governing body.

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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?	3
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?	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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

12 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Squirrel Hayes First School, Biddulph ST8 7DF Thank you for welcoming us and for being so helpful and friendly. As you know, I have been visiting the school regularly to check how well the headteacher and all the staff are doing in helping you to improve your work. It is really good to see that your school has improved and that you are all receiving a better quality of education than you did in the past. This means that I don't need to come back again! Although I will miss my visits to see you, I am really pleased that, with your support and hard work, the headteacher, teachers and all the other adults who work with you have been successful in making things better for you.

Throughout my visits I have always been impressed with the cheerful and sensible way you get on with your work and always try to do your best. You work and play together well and, as time goes by, you are having more say in what you would like to see happening in the school.

To help the school do even better I have asked the headteacher, governors, teachers and all adults to continue with the good work in school and to improve the following things.

- Make sure that all of you receive enough help and support, so that you can do your very best and improve your standards even more in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Help teachers plan work for you that is always interesting, exciting and challenging.
- Make sure that the work you do is checked carefully to see that it is helping you make even better progress and achieve even more than you are doing at present.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful, and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Watters Her Majesty's Inspector