

Timbertree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103966
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336206
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Walker

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Tracey Tromans
Headteacher	Mrs Gwynith O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed eight teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the school improvement plan, the tracking system to monitor the pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, the work pupils were doing in their books and the questionnaires completed by staff, a sample of pupils and 67 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the rate of progress of all groups of pupils in the school
- the effectiveness of teaching in engaging the pupils so that they make at least satisfactory progress
- the quality of the curriculum and the systems of care, guidance and support for the pupils
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage in promoting the development of the younger children
- the effectiveness of the leaders and managers in driving improvements in the school.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average sized primary school and is situated in the Timbertree estate within Cradley Heath. The area served by the school is designated as a Sure Start area due to high levels of economic and social deprivation. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds although there is a small proportion from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are taught in two mixed-aged groups.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is organised through the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has received the National Healthy School, Active Mark and Basic Skills Quality Mark awards. The headteacher has recently revised the composition of the senior leadership team.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school's performance has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection. Attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and 2 is too low and indicates a considerable decline from previous years. Furthermore, a significant number of pupils are not making enough progress in lessons and over their time at the school. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate as many children do not make sufficient progress during their initial years at school.

A new system of target setting and tracking pupils' progress has been introduced across each year, so that underachieving pupils can be identified and supported. Although it is too early to assess the full impact of these changes, there are clear indications of some good progress in Year 6. However, there is limited evidence of sustained improvement across the school and a significant number of pupils are currently making inadequate progress. The quality of teaching in the school is inadequate as there is insufficient emphasis on improving the pace of learning. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to match the level of work to the abilities of the pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged to take responsibility for their own learning and they are not clear about how to improve their work so that they can make better progress.

School leaders and managers are not effective in tackling some of the weaknesses of the school and securing the necessary improvements. A number of the teaching and support staff are not fully embracing the vision for continuous improvement and there is some resistance to change. The school has experienced severe financial constraints which have inhibited the work of the headteacher and led to reductions in teaching and support staff. The presence of larger-than-average classes in some year groups reduces opportunities for individual attention and support with learning. The governing body has not been effective in its supporting and monitoring roles. It is aware of the problems, but has not challenged the school well enough to address the weaknesses and bring about improvement. There is a degree of fragility in the present senior management arrangements with the headteacher and assistant headteacher taking responsibility for too many areas of the school. The existing staffing structure across the school is not providing the most efficient or best use of the school's finances. The arrangements for the leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not fully effective. Middle leaders

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are also not successful in their supporting, evaluating and monitoring roles.

Provision for caring for the pupils is satisfactory as all staff treat the children supportively as important individuals. Pupils value being part of a caring community and generally enjoy their time at the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and demonstrate this through eating healthily and taking part in sporting activities. The school has been proactive in monitoring absences and encouraging better attendance from pupils. However, the attendance of pupils is still well below average and this is adversely affecting their progress.

Actions taken following the last inspection have not eradicated underachievement or below average attendance. As a result, Timbertree Primary School does not provide satisfactory value for money. The headteacher and the governing body are well aware of the key issues for improvement but have not been able to remedy some of the school's weaknesses or accelerate pupils' progress. The local authority has been supporting the school, but there are insufficient structures in place to sustain the necessary improvements. For these reasons, inspectors judge that the school has inadequate capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment of pupils across the school by:
 - making sure that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress in all subjects
 - using the tracking systems to identify and provide additional support for underachieving pupils
 - setting targets for pupils which are based on previous performance and challenging them to raise their expectations.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the school by making sure that all teachers:
 - use assessment information more effectively to inform their planning and teaching styles
 - match the level of work to the abilities of pupils
 - enable pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning
 - ensure that pupils know clearly how to improve their work and make good progress.
- Develop the quality and consistency of leadership and management at all levels across the school by:
 - ensuring that there is a shared vision and commitment from all staff for the continuous improvement of the school
 - developing the role of governors in their supporting and evaluating roles
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so that they are providing effective

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support for teachers and monitoring the quality of learning

- reviewing the existing staffing structure so that there is a more effective and efficient use of resources.
- Improving attendance to be at least average with a focus on the few families who persistently do not send their children to school by:
 - using external agencies to support parents and carers
 - developing strategies to further improve the attendance of all pupils.
- Develop the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that there is more focus on matching teaching strategies to children's needs including those with additional learning needs
 - developing a more rigorous and consistent system of measuring the progress of children so that assessment is integrated into the programmes of work
 - increasing the effectiveness of the present leadership and management arrangements.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' attainment is low across the school and standards fell sharply in the national tests in 2009 in both Years 2 and 6. Pupils enter the school at a low starting point and do not achieve as well as they should as they move through the school. This is because pupils' progress between different classes is inconsistent and inadequate overall. A minority of pupils make at least satisfactory progress, but the majority do not because teaching does not accelerate their learning sufficiently. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to that of their peers. Teachers do not have a clear record of the rates of improvement for the pupils in their classes to help identify underachievement and implement strategies to accelerate progress.

Pupils are friendly and show respect towards each other. They feel safe in the school and know that there is always an adult they can turn to if there is a problem. They are confident that issues such as a rare case of bullying are addressed promptly and effectively. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils raise money for charities, such as the recent Haiti earthquake appeal and make a good contribution to the local community through litter picking in the neighbourhood and visiting the elderly at the Valley Court Nursing Home. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall although pupils are not fully aware of the cultural diversity of our society. Pupils' ability to work with others is developing satisfactorily although the low levels in basic skills means that they are not adequately prepared for their secondary education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The atmosphere in most lessons is positive and pupils want to do well. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan a range of interesting activities which are matched to their learning needs. As a result, pupils display interest, sustain good levels of concentration and make good progress. However, in many lessons, activities are not appropriately pitched to the level of the pupils. Too often, pupils listen to the teacher for too long and are not engaged in activities which accelerate their progress. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to inform their planning so that activities meet the different learning needs of pupils. As a result, teaching is not leading to adequate progress for the majority of pupils in each class. Marking is variable across classes and does not always show pupils how to improve their work.

The schemes of work in literacy and numeracy provide a satisfactory framework for improving pupils' progress. The school is developing these units of work to meet more precisely the different learning needs of pupils. The environment area and adjoining woods are used well to bring learning to life. A programme of personal, health and social education, promotes pupils' personal development appropriately. A tutor from an arts company provides additional experience in drama and dance. All pupils benefit from the comprehensive provision in physical education. Pupils are developing information and communication technology skills through the use of computers. A number of

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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educational visits and extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' enjoyment and experience of school.

There is a strong emphasis on the pastoral care of pupils by all teaching and support staff. Satisfactory working relationships between the school and external agencies benefit potentially vulnerable pupils, ensuring their social and learning needs are met. Teaching assistants provide adequate support for a small number of pupils who sometimes display challenging behaviour, so that learning is not disrupted in lessons. There are clear procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and following up absences, although attendance is still below the national average. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to support a smooth transition to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The newly formed senior management team is actively supporting the changes which are necessary in the school. However, actions taken to secure the improvements are not yet fully embedded. Leaders have not been fully effective in ensuring that all teaching is more focused on improving rates of pupils' progress. The governing body has not been involved sufficiently in carrying out its evaluating and monitoring roles to support the necessary changes.

The school improvement plan is a concise working document with clear actions and targets which are particularly focused on improving pupils' attainment and progress. Procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and underpin the school's caring approach. There is a clear commitment in the school to inclusion and equality of opportunities for all. However, the school is not presently promoting equal opportunities effectively because there are significant groups of pupils who are not making sufficient progress. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion although it recognises that more could be done to evaluate the impact of this work in the local community.

The school works hard to develop positive relationships with parents and carers. It sends out regular information about school events and encourages parents to support their children with their learning. The school acknowledges that there is still work to be done to gain the full support of all parents and carers. The school has satisfactory partnerships with the Back Country Challenge schools, external services, secondary schools and networks of primary schools within Sandwell.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Nursery and Reception classes provide a secure and interesting environment which children enjoy and appreciate. However, children do not make sufficient progress in developing skills and knowledge to enable them to catch up from their low starting points, particularly in language and number. Structured activities for the children have a significant impact on their personal development. The children develop satisfactory social skills, behave well and help each other. Most are interested in a range of activities and take some responsibility for choosing what they do. However, the key areas for learning are not fully integrated into imaginative schemes of work. Some of the teaching is inadequate because it is not sufficiently focused on meeting the different learning needs of the children. Staff do not consistently keep detailed records of the childrens' skills and use this information to inform their planning and learning activities. The newly-formed outside area provides a range of activities and experiences for the children. There is regular liaison with parents who speak favourably of the care and support for their children. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage teaches a class in the main school so is not well placed to support the necessary improvements and ensure that staff plan together so that children make better progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were positive about the work of the school. Parents emphasised the caring approach of staff towards their children. A significant minority of respondents suggested the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection the inspectors found very little evidence to support this view and judge that the school deals effectively with pupils who display challenging behaviour. A small minority of parents noted that they do not feel that the mixed-aged classes in Year 3, 4 and 5 are best for their children. The inspectors found no major difference in the progress of pupils in these classes compared with those in single-age classes. A significant number of parents were not happy with their children's experience of school. The inspectors endorse this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Timbertree Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 193 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	34	28	41	13	19	3	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	31	33	49	9	13	4	6
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	26	38	56	7	10	4	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	29	31	46	8	12	8	12
The teaching is good at this school	14	21	37	54	10	15	4	6
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	25	36	53	11	16	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	28	37	54	11	16	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	15	31	46	10	15	6	9
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	24	33	49	10	15	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	10	30	44	16	24	14	21
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	12	36	53	15	22	5	7
The school is led and managed effectively	5	7	32	47	18	26	10	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	24	10	24	9	22	10	24

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Timbertree Primary School, Cradley Heath, B64 7LT

Thank you for making us welcome and for talking to us during the inspection. We really enjoyed watching your lessons and looking at your work. It was also good to see you in the assembly and during playtime.

We found some positive things about your school.

You told us how much you enjoy school.

You are friendly and show consideration to others.

You have a good understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

You make a good contribution to the school and local community.

The teachers and support staff care for you and treat you as important individuals.

However, we found that there are also some important things that need to be better and so we have judged that your school needs 'special measures' to help it improve quickly.

We have asked your school to:

- help all pupils make better progress in English and mathematics
- encourage teachers to share their ideas to help you all make the best possible progress in lessons
- ensure that leaders at all levels have effective plans for improvement
- improve the level of attendance of those pupils who are not coming to school regularly
- improve the provision in the Nursery and Reception classes so that the younger children make a good start at school.

Other inspectors will visit your school in the future to see how it is improving. Keep working hard and enjoying the many things you do at Timbertree Primary School.

We wish you success in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker

Lead inspector

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