



Straits Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103827
LEA Dudley
Inspection number 277003
Inspection dates 15 September 2005 to 16 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mike Capper RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Longfellow Road
School category	Community		Lower Gornal
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Dudley, West Midlands DY3 3EE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818575
Number on roll	316	Fax number	01384 818576
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs L Downing
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr Adrian Slack

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school is situated in Lower Gornal on the edge of urban Dudley. The school has grown in size over the last few years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number identified as having special educational needs. Children's attainment on entry to the school is above average overall. There is only one reception class in the autumn term, with more children admitted at the start of the spring term. At the time of inspection, the school was undergoing building work to provide new classrooms for pupils in Year 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges itself to be good. Inspection findings are that this is a satisfactory school that provides sound value for money. The headteacher and governors are strongly committed to moving the school forward. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory although better use should be made of information on pupils' progress in order to form a more accurate picture of how well they are doing. Provision for children in the reception class is good, helping pupils to progress well in their first year in school. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress and attainment is above average overall, although test results in mathematics have consistently lagged behind those for English and science. There is much good teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6, but a lack of challenge in some lessons means that more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. Pupils' personal development is good: they are happy, well cared for and love coming to school. They feel secure and valued and enjoy the imaginative way that the school enriches the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that expectations are high enough for all pupils, especially the most able
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teaching methods consistently engage and challenge pupils and meet differing needs
- The school should make better use of the information it has on the progress pupils make so that it can plan how to improve more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with good basic skills. They achieve well in the reception class and, by the end of the reception year, children's attainment is above that found nationally. Children achieve especially well in personal, social and emotional development. They are confident and happy, showing good levels of independence for their age.

In Years 1 to 6, standards are above average overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress, with the best progress being made in Years 5 and 6. In recent years, standards have been better in English and science than in mathematics. However, standards in mathematics for the present Years 5 and 6 are as good as in English and science. This is the result of good teaching in these year groups and the fact that they had achieved above-average standards when they were in Year 2.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, but the most able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. As a result, not enough pupils gain the above-average Level 3 by the end of Year 2 and the above-average Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. In science, the most able

pupils do better because the teachers are more ambitious and set higher expectations for pupils, who develop good investigative skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils are keen to learn and happy to come to school. They report that 'school is excellent, lessons are good fun and teachers are kind'. Rates of attendance are good and, by Year 6, pupils are confident and eager learners, taking pride in their work and the school. Pupils generally behave well, work hard and are polite and courteous to visitors.

Moral and social development is good. Pupils happily celebrate each other's achievement at 'Showcase Assemblies' as well as during lessons. They take part in a range of community activities and willingly raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. There is an active school council that helps pupils to make a positive contribution to school life. Their suggestions have helped in many ways, for example, helping to improve playtimes by introducing new playground games.

Children have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and they know what they need to do to stay safe. They talk confidently about how healthy food and exercise will help them to concentrate and do 'even better in school'. Older children confidently take the initiative both in and out of lessons. For example, they recently organised a 'crisp-free' disco because they wanted the event to be healthy. Activities such as this also help older pupils to gain an understanding of how to manage simple budgets, preparing them well for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school is accurate in its judgement that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although there is much good and some outstanding teaching, the quality is uneven, meaning that there are variations in how well children learn from year to year.

Good teaching in the reception class and in Years 5 and 6 helps children to progress well in these year groups. The high expectations of teachers and the good pace to learning mean that time is rarely wasted and children are expected to try hard at all times. In contrast, where teaching is less effective and occasionally inadequate, teachers do not plan work that meets pupils' individual needs closely enough and they do not always successfully keep pupils on task. This is especially evident in mathematics lessons, where there is sometimes a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. Consequently, there are occasions when these children learn too slowly.

Throughout the school, teachers contribute well to the good personal development of pupils. They mostly plan interesting work that motivates and engages pupils. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to explain new concepts and to bring

activities like mental mathematics alive. Relationships between adults and children are good. This means that children enjoy school and are keen to do their best.

Well-trained teaching assistants give good support when they are working with groups of children with learning difficulties, ensuring that they make good progress over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers work hard to make learning fun by planning interesting and stimulating lessons. Particularly noteworthy are the 'Creative Learning Days' when pupils from different classes work together on a range of activities, which significantly broadens pupils' experiences, brings topics alive and encourages pupils to apply literacy and numeracy skills practically. However, the curriculum does not always provide enough challenge for more able pupils. This is an important weakness, especially in mathematics, that slows the progress of some pupils.

There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, which helps ensure pupils work hard in most lessons. Pupils in Year 6 spoke very positively about what they had done on their recent visit to an outdoor centre in Devon. They worked in teams and the boost to the self-esteem of pupils was evident in the way that they responded to each other in lessons.

A further strength of the curriculum is the good range of clubs that also make learning fun and help to motivate pupils, including some clubs which are planned specifically to support children who are struggling in class. These have a good impact on learning, for example, helping a number of pupils to achieve well for their ability in national tests in Year 6 in 2005.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, pupils are well cared for and they are constantly reminded by staff about the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Members of staff have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs and they generally provide good support and guidance, although there are inconsistencies in the use of information on pupils' progress across the school. There are rigorous child protection procedures, and a good training programme ensures all members of staff know what to do if they feel a child is at risk.

Parents are rightly very pleased with the help their children receive when they first start school in the reception year. Home visits at the start of each year and good opportunities for children to work in the school before they start full-time ensure that the children get a good start to their schooling, and this is a key factor in the good progress that is made in the reception year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders are hardworking and enthusiastic. The headteacher, governors and staff work well as a team and are strongly committed to school improvement. There is a clear vision of what sort of school is wanted and progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The most significant weaknesses have been successfully addressed and the recent focus on making learning fun and providing high levels of care has been effective in raising standards.

The school checks its own work well but judgements made are not always accurate enough. The checking of teaching is thorough and accurate and there is a good understanding of where improvement is needed. However, not enough use has been made of the information collected on the progress pupils make; therefore more challenging work could be set for the most able and improvements needed in the teaching of mathematics could have been more quickly applied.

A strength of the headteacher's leadership is the way he values all members of the school community. New members of staff are supported highly effectively when they start work in the school and quickly take on significant responsibilities. Parents and carers are regularly consulted about their views of the school and these are largely very positive; for example, one parent commented: 'This is a lovely school....staff ensure that each child enjoys every aspect of their time in school'.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The Straits Primary School, Longfellow Road, Lower Gornal, Dudley West Midlands BDY3 3EE

17 September 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us and showing your work. You were very polite and friendly.

What we liked most about your school:

Your work in English and science is good, and you make especially good progress in Years 5 and 6 where your work is particularly neat and tidy.

Children in the reception class get a good start to their education and are quickly learning lots of new things.

We are very pleased that you enjoy school, behave well and work hard in lessons.

We are pleased that the school teaches you about the importance of staying safe and healthy.

We think that your teachers look after you well and make school fun and we like the way that you look after each other and celebrate each other's successes.

Members of staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better.

Your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now:

We have asked the teachers to help you to learn even more quickly in mathematics.

We feel that sometimes the work is not hard enough for some of you.

We think the headteacher and governors need to make more use of all the information they have about how well you are doing to help them improve the school even further.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr M. Capper Additional Inspector