



Mesty Croft Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103907
LEA Sandwell
Inspection number 277025
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Ian Knight RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Luke's Road
School category	Community		Wednesbury
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands WS10 0QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5560854
Number on roll	368	Fax number	0121 5053752
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Kirby

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area of considerable social disadvantage in Wednesbury. Over a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, compared with the national average of about one in six. Almost all pupils are White British. A few are Indian, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean or of mixed heritage. A handful is at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school judges that its effectiveness is satisfactory. However, although it can demonstrate some recent improvements, most noticeably in the juniors, standards in the infants are too low. Whilst there is some good teaching in the infants, not all teachers consistently challenge all pupils at the right level. Consequently, the school is not effective and does not give value for money. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Activities led by adults and those chosen by children are carefully balanced to enable children to grow in confidence and self-esteem. The school is caring, pupils feel safe and they behave well, but the formal aspects of child protection are not fully in place. The curriculum is enhanced well and now includes clear progression in the skills and knowledge pupils are expected to acquire. The headteacher and other senior staff have a clear vision for the school and are suitably focused on raising achievement. However, budgetary constraints and instability of staffing have had an impact on how quickly the school has been able to improve. The local education authority has provided the school with intensive support and the areas of high focus, principally English in the juniors, have improved. Whilst this is not yet evident in external test results, it indicates that the school has the capacity for further improvement.

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and teaching in the infant department.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that all teaching, especially in the infants, is planned so as to meet the needs of all pupils in the class, enabling them to make rapid progress and achieve at least satisfactorily
- closely monitor the work of the school, especially in the infants, to ensure that the momentum of improvement is maintained.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children enter the nursery with standards that are well below average, especially in the areas of communication and personal development. In a caring atmosphere, they make satisfactory progress, but still enter Year 1 with standards that are below average.

In 2004, standards in national tests for pupils in Year 2 were exceptionally low, and had been declining modestly since 2002. The provisional results for 2005 indicate some improvement, but standards are still too low, even taking account of the low standards with which pupils entered Year 1. Overall achievement in Years 1 and 2 is inadequate

because the quality of teaching is not consistent enough across the three classes to maintain rapid progress.

Standards in 2004 in Year 6 were above average. This was not maintained in 2005 and standards fell. However, data in the school shows that, in those year groups that had stable staffing, the intensive support supplied by the local education authority enabled much improved progress in English. Overall, achievement in the juniors is satisfactory.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well in class by teaching assistants and sound individual education plans. Consequently, they make satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers. Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Spiritual and moral education is supported effectively through well planned assemblies, religious education, and a programme of personal, social and health education. Behaviour is good, although when teaching is mundane pupils become restless and inattentive. Attendance has improved from the time of the last report and is satisfactory. This school now keeps parents better informed about attendance patterns and the problems created by absence. Pupils enjoy their education, showing great enthusiasm and commitment, especially in those lessons where the variety of activities engages their curiosity. The school works hard to encourage healthy lifestyles. Fruit and water are provided for younger pupils, and school dinners offer a choice of healthy options, which they are encouraged to take up. Apart from physical education lessons, there is an extensive range extra curricular sport and fitness related activities. Pupils contribute to the community in charity appeals. They learn much from visits to and from local businesses, churches and faith centres, and community services, such as police. Good considerate behaviour to each other, the ability to work cooperatively and learning of basic skills help equip them to be economically active in the future. Grade: 3

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Adults engage children in conversation about their activities that take place in small groups, indoors and out. Teachers and other adults know children well and plan activities that meet their needs. As a result, children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and are prepared for the National Curriculum in Year 1.

Whilst there is some good teaching in the infants, this is not apparent in all classes and teaching therefore is unsatisfactory overall. Too much teaching lacks pace because teachers do not always deal effectively with restless behaviour and tasks are not always matched closely to the needs of pupils. As a result, they do not make enough progress.

Teaching in the juniors is satisfactory. The tasks challenge pupils in the class at the right level and they make satisfactory progress as a result. Examples were seen of outstanding teaching, in which pupils were really keen to do well and please their teacher. In these lessons, relationships were relaxed and the atmosphere purposeful.

Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively by teaching assistants who paraphrase the teachers' words, act as an audience for diffident pupils and lead small groups. Consequently, these pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same progress in lessons as their peers. Grade: 4

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum. Good features in the Foundation Stage include particularly good opportunities for exciting outdoor and imaginative play that supports language development. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of planning in the infants that result in pupils in different classes progressing at different rates. Setting in English and mathematics in the juniors helps ensure that activities usually match pupils' needs. Subjects such as history, geography and design and technology are now taught regularly and pupils develop their skills satisfactorily. Better links are being made between subjects and information and communication technology is being used more regularly to support learning.

The range of enrichment activities is good. A wide range of visits, clubs and extra curricular pursuits helps to make learning interesting and fun. Health education is effective and there are good opportunities for pupils to exercise and keep fit. Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Whilst the environment is generally safe, statutory child protection procedures are not followed. Staff lack the induction and training they need to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities securely. Nevertheless, there is very little bullying in the school and staff take prompt action to nip any problems in the bud. The school is a safe place in which children move around the building in a calm and purposeful manner. Vulnerable children are known to staff who check up on their progress regularly. There are good opportunities to prepare pupils for the move to secondary school with visits from their teachers. The school works well in enlisting help from others, such as educational psychologists, social workers and speech therapists. At present, the process of target setting and assessment is inconsistent. Some teachers offer clear advice on how well pupils are doing, but too often advice on how to improve is imprecise. Grade: 4

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The amount of improvement that the headteacher has been able to secure in his two years at the school has been limited by external factors:

he inherited a huge budget deficit; this is reducing in a planned way but it has meant, for example, that it has not been possible to appoint a deputy headteacher to support him

staff absence through illness and retirement affected the continuity of learning in some classes

whilst a stable senior leadership team is now in place, there was a considerable time when the school lacked some senior leaders because the school wisely waited to appoint the right people to these posts.

Satisfactory leadership and management, supported by the local education authority, enabled some improvement to take place. Where staffing was stable, for example in Years 4 and 5, clear improvement in reading and writing followed. Numeracy has developed slowly because the subject leader was appointed only last Easter. Monitoring and observation of lessons by senior leaders fulfil statutory requirements, but do not take place regularly enough to enable teachers to benefit fully from sharing good ideas and receiving support on a regular basis. As a result, some areas, including the infants, have not improved and remain inadequate. Nevertheless, the headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have a clear grasp of the issues within the school, and the improvements that have been secured indicate a strong capacity to improve further. The governing body discharges its responsibilities soundly, with the exception of its duty to fulfil statutory requirements for child protection procedures. Grade: 3

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	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?	4	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?	4	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	4	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	No
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

Mesty Croft Primary School St Luke's Road Wednesbury WS10 0QY

19 October 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and learning what you like and do not like. Thank you for being helpful when we did not know which way to go or what to do with our trays after lunch! This letter is to tell you what we found out.

What we liked about the school:

most of you behave well; that helps your teachers to teach and you to learn

you told us you enjoy school and feel safe there

teachers have worked hard to make nursery and reception exciting places to learn and to help these children get better at talking, reading and all the other things they learn

some classes are learning more because of new things your teachers are doing, like the reading project in Year 5 that involves your parents too.

What we have asked your school to do next:

not all classes in the infants are doing as well as they could, so we have asked your teachers to make sure that what they ask you to do is hard, but not too hard!; you can help by really trying to do just what the teachers ask you, even if it is different to how lessons have been before

we have asked your headteacher and the other senior teachers to keep a close eye on what happens in classrooms to make sure that teachers are asking you to do the right things and to give them good ideas if not.

Yours faithfully

Ian Knight Lead Inspector