



Droitwich, Westlands First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116671
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279870
Inspection dates 23 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Cole AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Farmers Way
School category	Community		Droitwich
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Worcestershire WR9 9EQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01905 772 740
Number on roll	247	Fax number	01905 779 656
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Roy Seabourne
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Millard

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-size first school serves an area of very high social and economic deprivation, which is reflected in the fact that almost half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The attainment of children starting at the school is extremely low and half of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. This is an extremely high proportion compared with other schools. Almost all pupils are White British. There has been a high turnover of staff and some difficulty in recruiting teachers to permanent positions.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of the school and the value for money it provides are inadequate. The school has a more positive view of its effectiveness, which it judges to be satisfactory. Determined leadership has led to many recent improvements in the quality of education and in pupils' personal development, but the pace of improvement has been hindered by the many changes to the staff. Improvements to teaching are now helping many pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in lessons, while the carefully targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties ensures these pupils make good progress. The gap between what all pupils should achieve and what they do achieve is therefore narrowing, but it is not yet closed. Older pupils still have much catching up to do and they leave the school with exceptionally low standards in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils' personal development is good. They try hard, behave well and feel confident and safe. There is satisfactory provision in the Nursery and Reception classes and these pupils make satisfactory progress. However, by the end of the Reception Year they are still acquiring the skills they need to start the National Curriculum. Teaching and learning have improved and are now satisfactory. However, teachers do not use assessment information sufficiently well to show pupils how to improve their work. Management is satisfactory but, with many subject leaders new to their roles, checks on the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough. The satisfactory level of improvement, especially given the school's staffing difficulties, shows that the school has the capacity to make further necessary improvements.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 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 standards in literacy and numeracy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always use the information gained from the assessment of pupils' work to show pupils precisely what they have to do in order to increase achievement and raise standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Strengthen subject leaders' use of checks on teaching and learning to bring about further improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Establish a stable staffing situation as soon as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

As a result of improvements to teaching and in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour, the pupils' progress has increased, but is still not sufficient to make up fully for low rates of progress in the past. As a result, pupils' achievement is inadequate. Having

entered the school with extremely low attainment, standards throughout the school remain exceptionally low against national expectations, and especially so for the oldest pupils who have been most affected by past underachievement.

Over the last three years, new initiatives to improve the curriculum and pastoral care have started to make a difference. The majority of pupils are now meeting challenging targets for progress from term to term. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress in the development of language, literacy and mathematical skills, largely because their good progress in developing personal and social skills has helped them to view learning positively. Intensive support for reading skills and improvements to the mathematics curriculum are also accelerating progress in Years 1 to 4. Specific programmes of support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. However, the oldest pupils have the most ground to make up and they are still leaving the school having achieved less than they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Many pupils join the school with considerable difficulties in personal and social development, and they make rapid progress in gaining these skills in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school very successfully encourages their confidence so that they work and play together well. Pupils behave well and work hard in lessons, which they say are the best part of the school day. Playground behaviour is good. Pupils show consideration towards each other and are very polite to adults. Their ready smiles clearly show their contentment. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved significantly since the previous inspection thanks to good attempts to help more pupils attend regularly.

Pupils know how to keep safe and who to turn to if they need help. They remember guidance given on avoiding risks. Pupils are beginning to understand how to keep healthy and take plenty of exercise at school. They understand that they should eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, but do not always choose to do so. Pupils' confidence, independence, enjoyment of learning and their determination to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills are all making a valuable contribution to the skills and qualities they need for adult life and work. Their ready capacity for teamwork also helps in this regard. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. They celebrate the traditions of other cultures and share intensely spiritual moments, when, for example, the 'magic' of making pancakes unfolds. Pupils contribute to the work of the school and the community well. They have a school council, and also a learning council where they suggest some of the topics they will study.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but staff changes and absences have hindered pupils' progress. Nevertheless, new initiatives and improvements to the curriculum are beginning to speed up progress. Lessons are at least satisfactory and some good teaching was seen. When teaching is good, teachers plan lively tasks matched to pupils' abilities and needs, and pupils respond with interest, effort and enjoyment. Teachers' good management ensures that pupils are well behaved and lessons are calm, orderly and purposeful.

By tracking pupils' progress regularly and precisely, most teachers now match work well to individual pupils' needs, but this has not always been consistent. There continues to be inconsistency in the way that teachers use assessment information and mark pupils' work to help them understand how well they are progressing or what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Teachers have made good efforts to improve it despite the many changes of staff. For example, improvements to planning mean that new skills build systematically on pupils' previous learning. A focus on developing pupils' reading skills is having a marked impact on progress, but not yet on standards. Pupils are now also experiencing a much wider mathematics curriculum. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good and work for them is closely matched to their needs through specific targets and careful monitoring. There are well planned links between subjects, which make learning relevant and interesting. This is particularly so for information and communication technology (ICT), for which the school has gained a national award. Pupils' enjoyment and experience are increased through the many visits to places of interest and by a good range of well attended clubs, such as those for dance and tag rugby. A strong programme of personal, social and health education, linked to many subjects, teaches pupils how to stay safe and healthy. In this area the school has gained a national exercise award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of the school's care, guidance and support is good. There is thorough attention given to pupils' health, safety and welfare. Personal development is nurtured well through a host of activities and support systems. For example, two 'nurture' groups give very effective support to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, where they have intensive support in a small group. Links with the adjoining Children's Centre mean that pupils have a secure and supportive place to be at the beginning and end of the day, which makes them more ready to learn and concentrate in lessons.

The school is quick to identify where pupils have particular needs in learning, and then provides thorough support. Members of staff meet the exceptional challenge of very needy pupils with a cheerful determination and very caring attitudes, strengths that are valued greatly by parents and pupils. External agencies and advisers are used well to plan support both in the school and, if required, at home. Where necessary, the school links well with parents to agree programmes of support. While generally satisfactory, support and guidance are not as strong for pupils' academic needs as they are for their pastoral care because pupils are not getting as much information as they should to show them how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Despite the considerable changes to staff, teamwork is good and many improvements have been made, thanks to the determination of the headteacher. Improvements to pupils' behaviour and attitudes and to teaching, in particular, have significantly contributed to increasing the rate of pupils' progress, although developments have not yet gone far enough to eradicate underachievement and raise the exceptionally low standards. The impact of the steps taken so far demonstrates that the school is able to move forward satisfactorily and make further improvement.

Satisfactory account is taken of parents' and pupils' views. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do, but takes a more positive view of its overall effectiveness than inspection evidence found. Many subject leaders are new to their roles and their checks on the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that teaching is consistently good. Governors and the local authority have been supportive and helpful to the school during its difficult period, particularly with its efforts to create and maintain a stable staff. There is a settled teaching force at present, but some appointments are still temporary.

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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?	2	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	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	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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?	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	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 inspectors who visited your school recently would like to say a big 'thank you' to you all. You were very friendly and we really enjoyed being in your school.

We were pleased to see how well you get on with life at school. Your behaviour is good and you try hard. You get on well with each other and with the grown-ups. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed school. We saw this when we came to some of your lessons. We noticed that all the school staff look after you. This must be why you told us you feel safe and happy at school.

We have said that your school has improved a lot in the last few years. It is giving you a satisfactory education and you are now making the progress you should do in your lessons. We know that this has not always happened in the past and that the older ones among you have not learnt all that you should have done. Although the school has improved, it needs to get better still. We have suggested some ways the school could help you learn even more. We have seen that you want to do as well as you can and we have asked the school to make sure you do, especially in literacy and numeracy. We have asked the teachers to tell each of you exactly what you have to do to improve your work. If they do this when they mark your work, you will have a better idea of how you can learn more. We have also said that they need to check more carefully that what they teach you is helping you as much as it should. We also think that your school needs to try to make sure that you have the same teacher for the whole of the year.

We wish you the very best for the future,