

Birds Bush Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124170
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292913
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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 on roll	
School	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Oates
Headteacher	Helen Coulthard
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Birds Bush Road Belgrave Tamworth B77 2NE
Telephone number	01827 475170
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than many primary schools and serves a socially mixed residential area with some deprivation on the outskirts of Tamworth. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities has increased in the last two years and is now significantly above the national average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds although two pupils are learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Birds Bush is a satisfactory school which is improving under the good leadership of the current headteacher. She has faced a significant challenge in rectifying the unsatisfactory aspects of leadership identified at the last inspection. Only now is the school reaching a position where structures and procedures are robust and largely effective. Responding to the previous lack of whole-school systems to support pupils' learning and the extent of shortcomings in assessment, quality assurance and staff professional development has entailed a considerable commitment of time and effort. At present the leadership and management of the school are, as a whole, satisfactory. Not all staff with leadership responsibilities are yet fully effective in their roles.

The school has worked hard to deal with the underachievement of older pupils, and particularly of boys. While some elements of underachievement remain, there has been significant improvement this year, as a result of increased tracking of pupils' progress and effective intervention to tackle weaker performance by both staff and identified pupils. Achievement is now satisfactory overall and improving. Pupils' attitudes are positive and their personal development and well-being are good. They are well behaved, polite and considerate to others. They enjoy coming to school and attend regularly.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are still some inconsistencies in the level of challenge in lessons caused mainly by weaknesses in the planning for mixed-year groups. At times this results in the progress of older and more able pupils being slower than it should be. Although targets are set, their use and the quality of marking are inconsistent so pupils do not always have enough information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. However, in some other respects, teaching and learning are good. Relationships are good and pupils are managed well. While the intake to the school has changed in recent years, teaching in the Foundation Stage is sufficiently good for pupils to make rapid progress and reach the expected levels by Year 1. Standards are now broadly average in both Year 2 and Year 6, with a marked improvement in mathematics this year and in the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, there is not enough help for higher attainers in mathematics and science, and the school has further work to do in this area. The good curriculum is making a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and enjoyment. There are considerable strengths in music and sport.

Pupils are cared for well. Parents hold a similar view and one indicated that she passes other schools to bring her child to Birds Bush because 'children are looked after so well here'. Pupils feel very safe. Although some aspects of academic guidance remain satisfactory, many elements of pastoral care are of high quality so that this aspect of the school is good overall.

Staff share the headteacher's clear focus on raising achievement. Rigorous checking of its performance provides the school with an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. The school has accurately identified its priorities for improvement. With some successes behind it but with more to do, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tackle the remaining pockets of underachievement across the school, particularly in mathematics and for higher attainers in mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teachers' planning consistently provides for the range of pupils in each class and that the marking of pupils' work is more thorough and consistent across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. The school has tackled the significant underachievement in Years 3 to 6 which was evident in 2005 and 2006 through rigorous tracking of progress, more effective deployment of support staff and a sharper focus on the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils, many of them boys, have made outstanding progress this year as improved teaching and target setting have enabled them to catch up from a low baseline. Although pockets of underperformance remain, the progress of boys has improved and it is now closer to that made by girls.

Pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage has continued to improve and is now good. From well below average standards on entry to Nursery, most now reach or exceed the expected levels by the end of Reception.

Standards have improved at the end of Year 2. A slight decline in writing has been outweighed by significant improvement in mathematics and reading. At the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are now average, although there are fewer higher attaining pupils in science and mathematics than nationally, and progress in mathematics remains erratic. The school is working hard to help pupils catch up. While a significant number are now working ahead of the expected level, this is more marked in Years 2 to 4 than beyond, where the legacy of previous underachievement is most evident.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show a keen enthusiasm for school and wholeheartedly join in with all the activities provided, especially sport. Attendance is average, but it is improving because the school responds robustly to non-attendance. Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in their good behaviour and the excellent way they take on responsibilities. They do substantial work in school and the community, for example, charitable collections, collecting litter with local community officers, applying for the many posts of responsibility in school and befriending younger pupils. There is a very active school council and pupils demonstrate growing maturity. They behave very safely, there is very little bullying and exclusions are rare. Pupils develop many qualities to help them in the future, including good social and team working skills, although their understanding of the world of work is limited. Nevertheless, their sound basic skills mean that their readiness for the next stage is satisfactory overall. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and take plenty of exercise, although some do not always practise what they know.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. They are highly responsive to the wonders of the natural world around them and have a good appreciation and tolerance of differences in others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although pupils' progress has, in the past, been inconsistent, there is clear evidence that teaching and learning are improving. Good staff development opportunities, together with comprehensive assessment, target-setting structures and increased accountability, have focused

teachers' attention much more on the progress which pupils make. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by committed teaching assistants. In the Foundation Stage, progress has improved as staff have become more aware of the targets children ought to achieve.

Pupils' learning is boosted in some lessons by the high quality of relationships, the effective management of behaviour and teachers' good subject knowledge. When pupils are motivated effectively, they answer questions eagerly, are attentive and concentrate well. Although the school has worked to develop planning structures which encompass classes with two year groups, there are still some weaknesses, with the older and more able pupils not always being sufficiently challenged. In addition, while systems for individual target-setting exist, there are inconsistencies in how this is operated between classes. Marking varies in rigour and does not always provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, broadly based and relevant, providing a wide range of experience for pupils. It meets statutory requirements. There is an appropriate emphasis on basic skills whilst other subjects and activities, including sport, are well-represented. The provision for music is a significant strength. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, with some very good activities to support the areas of learning. Personal and social education is covered thoroughly across the school. Whole-school planning structures take the mixed-age classes into account. A well-planned thematic approach, embracing subjects such as science, history and geography, increases their relevance to pupils and provides, for example, good opportunities for pupils to practise their writing. Themed weeks extend and reinforce learning by making it more exciting. There is an extensive range of planned visits to give learning relevance. The range of extra-curricular activities, well supported by pupils, is good. The school is rightly proud of its success in sports competitions. This contributes significantly to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are guided and supported well. The assessment of pupils' academic standards is satisfactory. While pupils are set personal targets in English and mathematics, they do not receive consistently clear information through marking as to what is needed to reach higher standards. Also, the assessment information available to teachers is not used consistently in planning. However, the guidance and support given to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good. Their progress is carefully tracked and the school focuses on providing support within ordinary lessons. Pastoral support is particularly effective. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are supported well and good use is made of relevant external agencies. Any bullying is dealt with effectively. Health and safety and child protection procedures provide good safeguards for staff and pupils. The school has worked effectively to raise pupils' awareness of health and diet. The school council introduces pupils to the principles of democracy and the importance of playing a part in the life of the community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership. She has set a clear direction for the school, putting systems and policies in place to bring about change and leading by example. Practice across the school is now much more consistent, with better team working. Restructuring of the senior leadership team has been supported by extensive professional development. Senior staff have clearer remits and are empowered to implement the shared vision for the school. Overall performance is well monitored and accurately evaluated and this process is effectively integrated into improvement planning. However, the impact on standards is only now coming through. The monitoring of teaching and learning, although extensive, has not always been sufficiently focused on raising the rate of pupils' progress. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have begun to make more effective use of the increased information made available to them and are now more prepared to hold school managers to account. Resources are deployed effectively and information and communication technology (ICT) is used increasingly both as a management tool and an aid to more effective teaching. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birds Bush Primary School, Tamworth, B77 2NE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and for being so willing to talk to us. We were impressed by how hard you work and how keen you are to do well in your lessons. We enjoyed the discussions we had with you. We know that you are proud of your work and the experiences you have at school. We found that Birds Bush Primary is a satisfactory school.

These are the things we most liked about your school.

- You are friendly, well behaved and polite. You are enthusiastic about school and attend as much as you can.
- You work hard and your teachers look after you well. The teaching is satisfactory and sometimes better and teachers give you sound guidance about how to improve your work. As a result, most of you make steady progress in your lessons.
- The curriculum is well organised and you have good opportunities in after-school clubs and activities. Music is a real strength.
- The headteacher leads the staff well and the way the school is managed by them all is satisfactory.

We have asked the staff to make some improvements to help the school to be even better.

- Make sure that you reach even higher standards right across the school, especially in mathematics where some of you have not been doing so well.
- Help teachers to support you even more by making sure that they plan the right work for everyone in their class and mark written work really carefully so that you know exactly how well you have done and what you need to do next.

You can all help too by continuing to work hard and do your best.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan Lead inspector