



Bilston Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 130305
Local Authority Wolverhampton
Inspection number 293623
Inspection date 19 September 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Albany Crescent
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bilston
Age range of pupils	5-11		WV14 0HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 558690
Number on roll (school)	132	Fax number	01902 558692
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Andrew Johnson
		Headteacher	Alan Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group 5-11	Inspection date 19 September 2006	Inspection number 293623
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves a deprived area of the West Midlands. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high, but only a very few, who have recently arrived in the country, are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in the school as a whole is average, but varies significantly between year groups.

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 provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils usually join the school with below-average standards. They make satisfactory progress in their academic work and leave with below-average standards. The common pattern is one of pupils making satisfactory progress from Reception to Year 2. Progress then slows in Year 3, especially in writing, before pupils make good progress in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Standards on entry to the school have been falling. The school was a little slow to react to the decline, but there are now strategies in place to improve the satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage. The work carried out last year on improving reading skills has proved successful and standards have shown considerable improvement across the school. Writing skills remain a relative weakness, because middle and higher attainers are not being pushed hard enough, especially in Year 3. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The work is well chosen to be just hard enough for the pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, but this is not the case lower down the school. Marking is also better further up the school, where it points out what pupils need to do to improve. However, in no year group is the information used to set targets for pupils, so they have nothing to aim for in their work.

Pupils also make satisfactory progress in their personal development. They are happy at school because they are known well as individuals by the staff, who take good care of them. Most pupils behave well in lessons, but one or two test the teachers' control and are quickly put in their place. In the playground, behaviour can be boisterous and, on occasions, pupils are overly cheeky to adults. Attendance has improved significantly this year, because the school is making greater efforts to work with parents.

The school's senior managers have a clear idea of where its strengths and weaknesses lie, although subject leaders do not play a big enough part in checking standards in their subjects or taking the lead on new initiatives. Plans to improve performance are usually successful, but checks on the effectiveness of teaching are not frequent enough to ensure that strategies to improve are put into practice quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Improve progress in writing by ensuring that the tasks set are hard enough for the middle and higher attainers, especially in Year 3.
- Make better use of information gained from marking so teachers can set targets for individual pupils that give them something to aim for.
- Ensure subject leaders play a greater role in checking the progress of pupils in their subjects and the leading of new initiatives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils left Year 6 in 2006 with below-average standards. They joined the school with below-average standards and made satisfactory progress. Standards in English in 2005 were much lower than in mathematics and science, because of weaknesses in both reading and writing. Standards in reading improved dramatically in 2006, but those in writing still lag behind.

Standards on joining the school have been falling in recent years, and are now well below average because of weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, standards have fallen at the end of Year 2, despite the pupils making satisfactory progress

Children make a satisfactory start in the Reception class, joining Year 1 with standards that are below average. They make good progress in their social skills, but do not learn to be independent. Satisfactory progress continues through Years 1 and 2, but slows significantly in Year 3, especially in writing. In these early years, lower attainers and those with learning difficulties often make better progress than middle and higher attainers. From Year 4, pupils make good progress and make up for slow progress in Year 3.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their improved attendance, which is now satisfactory. They like their teachers and say learning is fun, especially when they are active. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons, but there are one or two in most classes whose behaviour is only kept in check by the teacher's firm control. In the playground, pupils generally get on well with each other but can be boisterous and occasionally disrespectful to adults. Pupils are proud of their roles as school councillors and say their views are listened to, but they get relatively few other opportunities to take responsibility so this aspect is underdeveloped. Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy life choices. Raising funds for charities, performing for local residents and working with local businesses result in pupils having a satisfactory awareness of the community outside school, and this is improving through links with the church. By the time pupils leave the school they have made satisfactory progress in the academic and social skills that will be valuable to them in adult life and at work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons get off to a good start. Pupils are clear about what they have to do because tasks are explained well and teachers are very good at maintaining discipline. Pupils enjoy practical tasks and resources, such as computers, are used well to exploit this. The tasks themselves vary in quality. In Years 4, 5 and 6, different groups are given work that is at just the right level of difficulty. Lower down the school the work is not so well matched. All the pupils in one class, for example, slavishly practised writing the letters 'o' and 'a'. Whilst this was appropriate for the lower attainers and those with learning difficulties, for others it was far too easy. 'We did this in Year 1,' pointed out one boy. In Reception, the work is well structured, but this can go on for too long so pupils do not get enough opportunities to be independent. Marking also varies across the school, with too little guidance given to pupils on what they need to do to improve, until they reach Year 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

With some strengths, especially in sport, the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to be active in lessons, such as using their computer skills to research information. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs in Years 4, 5 and 6, but this is not always the case lower down the school, especially for the middle and higher attainers. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' understanding of being healthy and staying safe. The school uses its links with sporting bodies particularly well. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about the many sporting clubs and activities they are given and the visits and visitors that extend and enrich their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for in a happy and friendly environment. Relationships are good and pupils know there is always someone to turn to with any worries or concerns. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. Pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties are sensitively supported by all staff and other agencies to ensure they are fully included in all activities. The school has been making ever-greater efforts to involve parents, particularly through the highly successful family learning project. These links have made parents more aware of the importance of sending their children to school every day, which has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance.

The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school are only just being developed. Pupils are identified for extra support, but this is based on the standards they reach against the national average, rather than whether or not they are making enough progress. Information gained from assessments is not used

well enough to set targets or to help pupils understand how they might improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's senior managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The pace of improvement in the school is satisfactory, as is its capacity to improve further. Plans drawn up are often successful. Strategies to raise standards of reading have proved successful, as have the improving links with parents in improving attendance. However, the impact of initiatives in the classroom is checked too infrequently to ensure progress is being made on all priorities. Not enough subject managers are involved in monitoring or leading aspects of the school's work, so some areas, such as standards of writing, have been slower to improve as the senior managers take on too much themselves and do not delegate enough.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

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

20 September 2006

Dear Children

Bilston Church of England Primary School, Albany Crescent, Bilston, West Midlands WV14 0HU

Thank you for helping us when we came to visit your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you about your life at school and how much you enjoy it.

We can see why you like coming to school. Your teachers know you well and take good care of you. You like being active in lessons, so your teachers try to give you lots of practical things to do. Overall you are getting a satisfactory education, and there are a few things that the school could do better. The starts of lessons are really good, so you know exactly what you have to do, and why you are doing it. Some of you are a bit slow in learning to write, because the work is too easy for you. So we have asked the teachers to make sure you are given work to do that is just hard enough to make you really think. We have also asked them to use the marks you get in tests and for your work to set targets for each of you. This will give you something to aim for and show you how fast you are learning.

Some things have got a lot better over the last year. You are learning to read more quickly, for example, and are coming to school more often. You can help the school by making sure you come to school whenever possible. Some things have not improved as quickly as the school would want them to. So, we have asked more teachers to take charge of improving things, so that more checks can be made on how well the school is doing.

We hope you enjoy yourselves even more over the coming years and thank you again for your help.

Best wishes David Driscoll Lead Inspector