



Spon Gate Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131241
Local Authority Coventry
Inspection number 293728
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Upper Spon Street
School category	Community		Coventry
Age range of pupils	3–11		CV1 3BQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76226031
Number on roll (school)	183	Fax number	024 76258079
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jane Hartnett
		Headteacher	Tony Flynn
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Spon Gate is a smaller than average primary school. It serves an area of significant social deprivation. The attainment of most children on entering school is below that expected, particularly in language and social skills. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is other than English is higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with autism, is above the national average. There have been long-term absences of members of the senior leadership team over the last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a very caring school that provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. As one parent typically wrote, 'Spon Gate is a warm and welcoming school which listens to the needs of all who use it, children and parents.' Two key members of the senior management team have been on long-term sick leave and this initially adversely affected the day-to-day management of the school and its strategic leadership. However, the headteacher quickly restructured the team and this has proved successful, with a variety of initiatives having been introduced to support school improvement. The most influential of these has been the very close links with the local authority on an Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) to raise standards in English and mathematics. This has resulted in improving teachers' expertise in both subjects and the introduction of effective procedures to track the progress made by individual pupils. The early signs are that pupils are beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics although there has not been enough time to impact positively on overall standards.

Children enter Year 1 with standards lower than expected, though this represents satisfactory achievement from when they start school in the Nursery class. In recent years, the results of national tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have been below average. There have been particular weaknesses in their writing and mathematical calculation skills. Fewer pupils than average have reached the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2006 were much better, but this was only a very small cohort and not typical. Pupils in the current Year 6 show below average standards as in previous years. This represents satisfactory achievement when considering their prior attainment. Pastoral care is very strong with all pupils being valued and cherished by staff. Parents are very pleased with the way the school looks after their children.

Most pupils are mostly well behaved and considerate of others. They respect that other pupils may have different points of view to their own and are willing to listen to and discuss these. However, there is a significant minority of pupils, mainly boys, who behave inappropriately at times and show little interest in their work. Teachers manage this kind of behaviour well to minimise disruption to lessons. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants to give extra support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English. As a result, they make the same progress as other pupils. Because of the new tracking system, teachers are becoming more skilful at setting work that meets pupils' individual needs. Nonetheless, the school acknowledges that at times the work given to pupils is not challenging enough, especially for the more able. There is also acceptance of the need to add more variety to teaching and learning so pupils can be more creative and active in lessons. There is a satisfactory curriculum that is suitably enriched by a variety of extra activities, such as a residential visit for pupils in Year 6. Links with the community are good and effectively extend pupils learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the headteacher having a clear vision for the school's future development. All staff share this vision. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and because of this it has correctly identified the priority areas for

development. Governors support the school well and are appropriately involved in helping the school improve. The school has sound capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length, and in mathematics by improving pupils' skills in calculation.
- Ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, are effectively challenged.
- Develop a wider range of teaching and learning styles to better motivate pupils, especially some boys.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In recent years pupils have generally reached standards that are below average by the end of Year 6. The high numbers of pupils entering and leaving the school during the school year and the below average attendance disrupts pupils' learning. These factors have a significant impact on the standards that pupils attain. From their attainment on starting school the standards reached show pupils are achieving in a satisfactory way. The school has targeted the need to raise achievement and standards, particularly in writing and mathematical calculation, and for more able pupils in English, mathematics and science. Evidence indicates that pupils' progress in these areas is improving because of the school's involvement in the ISP project over the last year. Achievement and standards in science are relatively better than in English and mathematics. The school has identified the reason for this being that science lessons are mainly practical and more actively involve pupils in their learning. As a result, this style of teaching and learning is to be given more emphasis in other subjects and inspectors agree with that decision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and most of them behave well but there are pupils whose behaviour is not good enough. Pupils get on well with each other and with the adults in the school. In spite of the many good initiatives that the school has introduced, attendance is still below average, as it was at the last inspection. This is mainly due to regular absences by pupils from a few families and the school is working hard to support these families. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community and have been involved in several projects within the immediate area and the city, such as joining other schools for a mini-Olympics. One pupil perceptively said, 'That was fun because we had to cooperate with the other children.' Pupils understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and show an appropriate understanding of how to keep safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and because of this pupils make satisfactory progress. In the Foundation Stage, good emphasis is placed on developing children's language and social skills to prepare them for the demands of the work in Year 1. Through the school, teachers explain and demonstrate precisely what pupils have to do so they are clear about what is expected of them. A good example of this was seen in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson in Year 3. Because of the teacher's expertise all pupils made good progress in using the different functions of a computer keyboard to edit a piece of text. There are times when work given to pupils does not match their individual abilities and as a result some struggle to complete their work whilst other pupils find it too easy. Some lessons are too teacher dominated and so some pupils, mainly boys, lose interest and motivation. When teachers use different ways of helping pupils learn so they are actively involved, they show more interest and make better progress. For example, by using 'talking partners' pupils develop effectively their communication skills and understanding of their work, as seen in the lesson mentioned above.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage, children are provided with a variety of practical activities that capture their interest and help them make satisfactory progress. Through the rest of the school the curriculum is planned in an appropriate manner so that all aspects of subjects are covered. Provision for ICT has been improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and other subjects. Consequently, pupils' achievement in this aspect of English is hindered. Curriculum planning is being refined in mathematics so activities are better matched to pupils' individual capabilities, particularly in developing calculation skills. A variety of extra-curricular activities adds interest to the curriculum and further develops pupils' learning. For example, in a lunchtime dance class older pupils successfully developed the skills they learned in physical education lessons and said they enjoyed performing in front other pupils and parents. Pupils are prepared in a satisfactory way for the next stage of their education and future life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, support and guidance for all its pupils. All pupils have an identified adult with whom they feel confident to discuss any concerns they may have. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and are allowed to retire to the 'calm room' if they become upset. Relationships are good and pupils trust the staff to look after them. There are thorough child protection arrangements in place. Because of this all

staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Risk assessments are carried out conscientiously in and around the school and on educational visits. New arrangements have been introduced recently to more effectively track the progress that pupils make. These are not fully embedded and so the information gathered is not yet always used effectively to set targets for improvement for individual pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are committed to raising standards and helping all pupils achieve as well as they can. Through the use of school self-evaluation the headteacher and interim senior leadership team (SLT) have developed a secure understanding of what needs to be done to achieve this. All staff agree that working with the local authority on the IPS project has made a valuable contribution to school improvement. Staff morale is good with effective teamwork between adults supporting pupils well throughout the school. The inclusion of all learners is central to the school's vision. For instance, it is right to be proud of the provision it makes for pupils with autism, including the positive links with outside agencies.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are satisfactory and suitably identify areas that need improving. Lesson observations are carried out mainly by the headteacher and the intention is to widen arrangements to involve the members of the SLT to give them a better view of the quality of education through the school. New procedures for performance management have been introduced that more effectively link school improvement to teachers' ongoing professional development. Governance is satisfactory, with governors becoming increasingly involved and keen to play a more active role during the school day.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	3
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.

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

Thank you so much for the warm way in which you welcomed us when we came to your school. We really enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out about all the things you do. We would like to tell you what we found your school does well and how it could improve further.

Spon Gate is a friendly place in which to work and play. Most of you are well behaved and enjoy coming to school. Some pupils do not behave as well as they could do in class but your teachers make sure this does not disrupt your learning. Your school takes very good care of you and thinks all of you are very special. Your parents are very pleased about the way the school looks after you all. You told us how safe and secure you feel in school and how you can talk to a member of staff if you have any worries. All adults in the school are proud of you all and told us you are kind and considerate to others. We were particularly impressed by the way you raise money for a variety of charities, such as Children in Need.

There are some things that could be better. Your writing is not as good as it could be and sometimes the work you are given does not match your ability and let you make the progress of which you are capable. Also, skills of calculation are not good enough in mathematics. Your headteacher knows this and has some good ideas about how teaching can be developed further to help you improve your writing and numeracy and give all of you work that always makes you think hard. Teachers are also planning how to make your learning more interesting by making sure you can be more creative and actively involved in lessons. That is important as some boys, in particular, do not involve themselves enough at the moment.

We wish you all the best for the future.