

Moorcroft Wood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135016
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	294254
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Hamby HMI

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	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Leigh Smith
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bull Lane Bilston WV14 8NE
Telephone number	01902 495943
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school has not been inspected since it was formed by the amalgamation of the previous junior and infant schools. Since then, there have been a number of changes to staffing and to the school buildings and it is only within the past five months that the school has operated from a single site. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are relatively recent appointments.

The pupils come from the immediate area and are predominantly from White British ethnic backgrounds; the proportion entitled to free school meals is above average. There are more boys than girls in the school, particularly in Key Stage 1, where there are more than double the number.

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 satisfactory school. Since amalgamation, the school has faced numerous challenges, including operating from two sites, major rebuilding, and staff turnover, which have hampered efforts to improve the school. The signs of rapid improvement now evident are due to the commitment and expertise of the headteacher and her deputy.

Standards are rising, although they are still below the national average in all year groups. The pupils enter the Nursery with poor skills, particularly in communication and social development. They make steady progress through the Foundation Stage but still enter Year 1 with standards lower than the average. Achievement is good through Key Stage 1 and satisfactory through Key Stage 2. Pupils throughout the school achieve better in English because the teaching is good. It is very well organised by the coordinator, who sets high standards and has trained staff expertly in a highly effective method of teaching reading and writing.

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for its pupils. Pupils are listened to and their individual needs are carefully considered. Their personal development is good. The pupils take responsibility; most enjoy school and behave well. Although attendance has been below average, it is improving because of the effective action taken by the school and the local authority. The curriculum is satisfactory, providing good opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of different cultures, but the outdoor curriculum is not developed well enough in the Foundation Stage.

Teaching is satisfactory but it varies considerably between different year groups and subjects. The staff have good relationships with pupils and lessons are usually lively and productive. Assessment is used well in English to plan the next steps for pupils. However, in other subjects, it is not as effective. Consequently, work is not always pitched at the right level, resulting in tasks that are too easy for some pupils and too hard for others.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership skills, has worked tirelessly to improve the school, and is determined in her efforts to ensure that the pupils are given a good deal. The results of her hard work are showing through. For example, staff are working more effectively as a team, attendance has improved and standards are rising. Teachers are developing leadership roles, but as yet, do not have a good enough overview of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. The leadership team has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this has led directly to the improvements already made, indicating that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, by making better use of assessment to ensure that pupils' work is set at the right level for them.
- Develop the leadership and management roles of teachers so that they have a clearer view of the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility and have the skills to help all pupils achieve well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although still lower than average, standards are rising because of the school's successful methods of teaching English and the effective support given to pupils with learning difficulties.

School data show that the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties is now satisfactory, whereas it had been too slow. There have also been clear improvements in the achievement of boys. Boys are very engaged in their learning now, particularly in literacy sessions, and this helps them to achieve well in these lessons and reach their targets.

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with some good achievement in communication, language and literacy. The effective teaching of linking sounds to letters helps the pupils to make rapid progress with early reading and writing. Achievement through Key Stage 1 is good because the teaching is stimulating and the targets are challenging. Reading and writing are taught very effectively by well-trained staff and this helps the pupils to make particularly good progress. In Key Stage 2, achievement is satisfactory. There are aspects of good achievement in English, but instances in other subjects where the pupils do not do as well as they should, because of undemanding teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. They demonstrate this in their considerate behaviour and good dispositions to learning. They are polite, well behaved and aware of the need to keep fit and to eat healthily. The pupils enjoy responsibilities and know how to keep themselves safe. A competitive spirit is beginning to show through. For example, a house captain said that his job was to, 'motivate our team to get house points'. The pupils contribute to the wider community through fund-raising and this helps them to gain a range of basic skills, such as working in a team, which prepares them for the adult world.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils reflect in lessons and assemblies and have a good understanding of other cultures. Additional activities, such as Aboriginal storytelling and African art days, contribute further to their knowledge of other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved significantly according to the school's own records. However, its quality still varies between year groups and different subjects. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have started to iron out these inconsistencies by introducing a common method of literacy teaching and ensuring that staff are well trained in its use. This has been outstandingly successful and so the pupils learn quickly how to recognise letters and sounds and blend them to read words. The pace of these lessons is brisk and the pupils are very well motivated by the learning, so much so that in one lesson, the boys wanted to stay and finish their work rather than go out to play!

Pupils know their targets, which helps them understand what they need to do to improve. Some marking in English is very helpful, identifying the next steps, but marking in other subjects is largely confined to ticks, with little information about how to improve. Teaching in Year 1 and Year 2 is good because the teaching is engaging and makes good use of assessment. In other classes, the teaching does not take enough account of the wide range of ability and is not always pitched at the right level for the pupils. Consequently, learning is not as effective as it should be, particularly for more-able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is relevant to the pupils' needs because of its strong focus on communication skills, which helps pupils to develop confidence when speaking. The focus on personal development and literacy also helps pupils to become independent learners. The curriculum is enriched effectively through special focus weeks, such as 'science week', and through a wide range of visits to places of interest. Visitors to the school help to give the pupils a broad view of different cultures, which is necessary in this largely monocultural school community. The Foundation Stage curriculum includes a well-judged balance of work and play, but opportunities for learning outside are not yet developed well enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures to keep pupils safe are effective and there are good links with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. The pupils know where to go if they have a problem and welcome the new 'worry and suggestions box' as another source of support. Comments from the pupils such as, 'The dinner ladies are very kind,' and 'The teachers always help you,' show that there is a caring environment throughout the day. Parents are very pleased with the care shown to their children.

Tracking of pupils' progress is good and so the leadership team can identify any pupils who are not making the progress they should. Teachers have access to this information, but not all of them use it as purposefully as others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has been instrumental in the school's improvement. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses through their highly analytical evaluation. Other teachers are developing their managerial skills, but there are differences in the quality and impact of their work. In particular, the procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching vary too much. Successful management shows through in the improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and in English, but is not as clear in other subjects.

The governors are supportive and are developing their roles, but are not yet sufficiently involved with evaluating the school's work. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's aims and this aspect of work is developing well. In the past, boys have not achieved as well as they should, and the progress of some pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has been too slow. The leadership team identified these issues and has worked successfully to eradicate differences in achievement between various groups in the school.

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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?	3
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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

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?	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	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.

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

Thank you for making Mrs Hughes and me so welcome when we came to see your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We noticed that you behaved well and were kind to each other. We also saw how much you enjoyed your lessons, particularly in your literacy groups. You are learning quickly in these groups and so you can enjoy all the wonderful books that there are to read.

We have judged that your school is 'satisfactory'. That means that it has more good things about it than weaknesses. In order to make it even more effective, we have asked the teachers to think more carefully about the work that they set for you. Although they are good at doing this in your literacy sessions, in other lessons some of you are not given the right level of work. You could help with this by telling the teachers if you are finding work too easy or too hard.

We also noticed that some of you get on better in some lessons than others and so we have asked the teachers to check up on the teaching more often so that all of you learn well. This will help the teachers too, by developing their skills in helping to manage the school, so that your headteacher does not have to do all of it.

Your parents are right to be pleased with the good things about your school, such as how much the staff care for you and how well you get on together. Please thank them for filling in the questionnaires; they gave Mrs Hughes and me a really good view of their opinions.

Keep trying as hard as you can and enjoy all the things that Moorcroft Wood has to offer.