

Quarry Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103830
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308434
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Sarah Conway

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	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Chapman
Headteacher	Helen Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2004
School address	High Street Quarry Bank Brierley Hill DY5 2AD
Telephone number	01384 818750
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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

Quarry Bank Primary School is larger than most primary schools. The local area is mixed, with some families experiencing considerable economic and social hardship. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a few are from minority ethnic families. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. There are more pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than in most primary schools.. When children start in the Nursery their level of skills and knowledge is very low, especially in language and personal, social and emotional development.

The present headteacher was appointed to the permanent position in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Quarry Bank Primary School is an improving school providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness matches this assessment. Teaching is satisfactory, although it varies across the school. It is good for the oldest and youngest pupils, which is leading to good improvement of standards. It is satisfactory in the middle years and standards are rising satisfactorily here. The significant improvement in Key Stage 2 and in the Foundation Stage in the last year is due to the robust leadership of the headteacher who is well supported by the senior leadership team. Senior leaders track pupils' progress satisfactorily. However, subject leaders do not make enough use of tracking systems and information about pupils' progress to identify any difference in achievement within, and between, subjects.

Most parents are pleased with changes introduced by the relatively new leadership team, but a significant minority do not understand the reasons for them, for example the closure of the breakfast club. They are not sure who to go to when they have a concern. Pupils enjoy their learning and most work hard for their teachers. They are eager to share their good ideas to help the school improve further.

Until the last year, standards were not high enough. Standards have improved well in Key Stage 2, especially Years 5 and 6, due to the effective leadership and good expectations of the headteacher. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress from their low starting points because the quality of learning is good. Progress is satisfactory through Years 1 and 2, and standards rise to be below average by the age of seven.

Pupils' personal development is good and pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. They take on whole school responsibilities and help each other enthusiastically. They are generally well behaved, although there are a few pupils who are occasionally disruptive. Attendance rates are below average. The school is working successfully to improve them. The school encourages pupils' spiritual, moral and social development satisfactorily.

Pupils know who to go to when they have an accident or are worried about something. There is satisfactory care, guidance and support for pupils. They are safeguarded thoroughly. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. One example of this is the recent introduction of writing journals to use as a tool to improve pupils' writing, involving them in monitoring their own progress as they move through the school.

The satisfactory curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders are seeking to make better links across the curriculum and to improve the reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.

Standards are rising and pupils' progress is improving because the school is well led and managed. The new senior leadership team has quickly established itself as a force for necessary change, gaining the confidence of other staff and governors. Governors are developing a better understanding of what the school needs to do to improve and how to offer challenge to the school to secure those improvements. The school is beginning to set ambitious, yet realistic, targets to support improvement in pupils' achievement. There is good capacity to secure further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are happy in the Foundation Stage and they settle quickly into the Nursery. They make good progress and by the time they leave Reception their skills and knowledge are below the expected level. Children are organised into family groups which help them to make good progress in developing social and language skills. Teaching and the curriculum are good. Activities are well planned and purposeful to meet the needs of all children. There is high quality of care in providing for a safe environment, particularly for those with medical problems. Children are lively and inquisitive and behave very well. The school is developing the use of assessment to help children make a more successful move into Key Stage 1. The recent addition of an outside classroom has helped to extend all areas of learning. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure the quality of teaching is consistently good for all ages in order to accelerate progress and improve behaviour.
- Ensure subject leaders have well defined roles that include keeping a close check on pupils' progress and standards.
- Work to improve the partnership with parents so that they know more about their children's education and can, therefore, help to improve their progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average by the time pupils leave Year 6. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below expectation but children make good progress and by the time they enter Key Stage 1 their attainment has improved, although it is below average for their age. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress and enter Key Stage 2 with below average standards. Progress is better during most of Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where it is good, so that by the time pupils leave school, standards are broadly average. This represents an improvement on previous years when standards were below the national average and progress slower. Not all pupils make sufficient progress in Year 4. This is sometimes due to the length of time it takes to sort out poor behaviour.

The school recognises that progress is slowed at times when the pace of lessons is not brisk enough and work is not matched fully to higher attainers' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress, because they are supported well. Pupils with English as an additional language reach higher standards than other pupils and do well compared to national averages. School leaders are working to raise standards in writing by increasing the opportunities for pupils to write at length and for a real purpose.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are insistent that they enjoy their learning. They have a good awareness of the importance of a healthy and safe lifestyle. They know that an occasional treat is enjoyable, but they also know that five a day is the correct balance of fruit and vegetables. The Year 5 and 6 'Playground Pals' do a good job in helping others in the school community and the school council has been influential in ensuring there is an increased range of activities for lunchtime. Pupils' awareness of other cultures and communities is not as well developed as it could be. The personal, social and emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage is good.

Behaviour is satisfactory. Most of the pupils behave well whilst they are at school. A few pupils, especially in Year 4, are challenging in their behaviour. Attendance levels are below average, although they are improving steadily. The school keeps a careful watch on the absence of the few pupils who are regularly absent. These pupils miss a lot of important work when they are away. Those who attend school regularly develop satisfactory skills to help them in the wider world and in their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall teaching is satisfactory, although it is inconsistent across year groups. Classrooms are attractive and welcoming spaces in which to learn and relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between adult and child led activities, helping children to share and take turns.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good, but in a few lessons progress is slowed because teachers control the learning too much. Achievement is best where the pace of teaching is brisk and there is greater challenge which more effectively meets the needs of higher attainers. As a result, most pupils are always ready to learn and keen to do their best. This is most noticeable in the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6.

Teachers' planning is conscientious, although the information from assessment is not always used to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners fully. Marking of pupils' work is regular and thorough, but the involvement of pupils in tracking their own progress is at an early stage of development. Senior leaders are developing the use of coaching and mentoring to bring further improvements to the quality of teaching and raise standards further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum covers all the subjects that it should and it allows the pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding satisfactorily. The basic skills of English and mathematics are at the heart of the curriculum and senior leaders keep a watchful eye to make sure that pupils learn to read and write and cope with mathematical problems successfully. There are appropriate programmes of work in science and ICT. The curriculum includes satisfactory opportunities for pupils to build skills in personal, social and health matters. The development of pupils' creativity is not consistent in all classes.

Children in the Foundation Stage have a carefully planned curriculum that meets their needs. Planning for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory and in the Individual Needs Centre it is good. The curriculum is not always planned precisely enough to challenge more able pupils. The curriculum does not place enough emphasis on pupils working independently and practically and so some lose interest and their behaviour deteriorates. Progress is then reduced.

There is a satisfactory programme of out of school activities that include educational visits and a number of sports and leisure activities. Pupils enjoy these. Parents would like a broader choice of such activities, particularly before and after the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say that their teachers look after them well. There are appropriate systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe, secure and happy and that they can learn successfully. Procedures to safeguard pupils are effective. Good care is given in the Foundation Stage, which ensures children settle well to their learning.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. Most of the pupils know their targets, although the marking of work does not always identify whether they have reached, or are near, their targets. In addition, the comments only infrequently indicate what should be done next to improve the work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The improvements to standards are directly attributable to the strong leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team. School self-evaluation involves all members of staff and is largely accurate. Senior leaders have a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what they need to do next to bring further improvement. Robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are beginning to take effect and teachers' expectations are rising. There is good capacity to improve in the future.

Senior leaders have recently introduced systems to set targets for all pupils and to track whether they are on course to meet them. These systems are not yet consistently used by all teachers to ensure good progress. Subject leaders are involved in monitoring lessons, but their role in checking learning and overall provision is not sufficient.

Whilst governors are supportive and involved in the life of the school, they are not fully aware of parents' views of the school and parents do not know them well enough.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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.

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

17 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Quarry Bank Primary School, Quarry Bank DY5 2AD

We enjoyed the two days we spent with you just recently and we would like to thank you for being so welcoming and helpful. Many of you told us that you enjoy your learning. Here are some of the things that contribute to that enjoyment.

- You are taught satisfactorily and your learning is getting better.
- Your headteacher leads the school really well.
- The Nursery and Reception are secure and happy places to be.
- You reach the expected standards in your work and this is improving.
- The progress you make is satisfactory and it is improving, especially as you get older.
- Most of you behave well and attend regularly.
- Teachers and other adults look after you well.
- The school listens to your ideas and has taken up some of them to improve the school.

To help the school get even better we have suggested three things for it to do.

- Ensure you have even more good lessons.
- Ensure all leaders play a full part in making the school a better place to learn.
- Involve your parents and carers more in its work.

We know that teachers are eager to make these improvements and that you will help them.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Conway Lead inspector