

# Stow Heath Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104324
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308572
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marion Wallace

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Simkiss
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Franks
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Hill Road Portobello Willenhall WV13 3TT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558820
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 558821

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Stow Heath is a larger than average junior school with a resource base for 22 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average. No pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. In most years, attainment on entry is below average. The headteacher has been in post since April 2007. This is the second year that the school has been part of the local authority Improving Schools Programme. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark silver award, Healthy School's award, Becta Excellence in ICT Award for Learning & Teaching and the Active Sportsmark.

## 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 and improving school. Pupils generally enjoy school and have positive attitudes to their work because the school cares about their personal welfare and is a well organised community. This view is supported by both parents and pupils. One parent summarised the opinions of many by saying, 'Children are happy at school and every opportunity is taken to encourage learning'.

Many strategies have been put in place to eradicate recent underachievement. An intensive support programme from the local authority, together with additional support from two consultant headteachers, is having a significant impact. Although time is needed for the many initiatives to fully embed, there is already clear and tangible evidence that strategies are having a positive effect. The school has the right focus and a satisfactory capacity to improve. It has made satisfactory progress overall since the last inspection because of the significant strides made recently.

The relatively new headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and staff, is determined to improve the school and has a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. He has quickly gained the respect of teachers, parents and pupils. Improved monitoring and evaluation of provision focuses strongly on how well the school supports pupils' progress and is leading to the right actions for improvement. The role of middle leaders in driving school improvement is less well developed than that of senior staff as they are new to their roles. Nevertheless, they have made a reasonable start.

Teaching is good in Year 6 and pupils in this year group are making rapid progress in their learning. While many pupils, including the more able pupils in Year 6 are reaching the level expected for their age, standards are still below average overall. Teaching is satisfactory and improving across other year groups with some good elements already present. As a result, all groups of pupils are now making sound gains in their learning. Pupils in the resource base and the significant number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Teaching is not, however, ensuring good progress across the school because it does not always challenge all pupils fully or involve them actively enough in lessons.

A satisfactory curriculum meets pupils' needs adequately. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall. However, attendance is unsatisfactory and has been too low for a number of years. The school recognises the need to work more closely with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. Behaviour and relationships are good and pupils know a reasonable amount about how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils make a sound contribution to the school and local community. Pupils cannot, however, take real responsibility for improving their learning because the school's use of individual targets is variable. Pupils are aware of their targets. However, individual pupils do not know what they have to do to improve their own work and to reach the targets they have been set.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching always challenges all pupils and involves them actively in lessons so that progress is accelerated and standards are raised.
- Improve the use of individual targets to ensure that all pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work and reach higher standards.
- Work closely with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

- Develop the role of subject leaders in driving school improvement.

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**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points although standards across the school are below average. In the past, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have been well below average and there has been underachievement. Effective measures have been put in place to improve teaching and there are now clear signs of raised achievement. Inspection evidence and the school's own tracking systems indicate that the current pupils in Year 6 are on course to meet their targets at the expected level in English, mathematics and science. Initiatives that provide pupils with more opportunities to write at length and improved strategies for mental mathematics and calculation are beginning to bear fruit. Improvements are evident in science because of effective action to raise standards in this subject. Pupils are developing a sound knowledge of scientific investigation and record their findings systematically. Handwriting is well developed and there are good standards of presentation throughout the school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved and these pupils are now making sound progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They cooperate well with each other and relationships are strong. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of local cultural heritage, but celebrations of the rich cultural diversity in the school are underdeveloped. Pupils say they feel safe and have a sound understanding of the need to keep healthy. Most pupils enjoy school but the attendance rate is too low and this restricts the progress made by pupils who have a lot of absences. Pupils act responsibly, for example in carrying out their roles as playground peer supporters or house captains. The school council members are sensible and keen to fulfil their responsibilities. They are currently involved in improving the school playground. Pupils develop awareness of the needs of others through fundraising events. They learn to be part of a team, for example in sporting events with other schools. Pupils' workplace and other skills are developing adequately but they do not always have the chance in lessons to develop independence as learners.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Lessons are well organised and pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning. Strong relationships and good attitudes and behaviour contribute to a positive climate for learning. Teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils clearly. In the better lessons, a strong drive and determination to improve standards result in a brisk pace to learning through well-focused activities. Teachers manage time well and expectations for how and when work is to be completed are clear. Planning is detailed and identifies clearly what the pupils will learn. There are some features of teaching that require improvement, however, if pupils' progress is

to be accelerated and standards are to be raised. The use of questions to extend learning is variable and teachers do not yet target questions to different abilities within the class. Strategies to involve pupils actively in lessons to promote learning, such as the use of partner discussion and the use of individual whiteboards, are inconsistently applied. Teaching assistants support those who need extra help well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Curriculum planning has improved, is detailed and there is now a closer match of the curriculum to the needs of pupils. There is a clear focus on English, mathematics and science. Strategies such as the 'Big Write', are encouraging pupils to write at length in English and other subjects. Mathematics skills are used and developed adequately in science. Pupils use computers well to enrich learning in other subjects, for example, pupils in Year 6 design adverts using computers. Personal, social and health education is planned satisfactorily and ensures pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay safe and be healthy. Pupils benefit from the residential visits in Year 4 and Year 6 when they experience outdoor adventure activities. Enrichment activities and the range of extra-curricular clubs are limited, however, for the size of the school. Pupils enjoy the after-school multi-sports club but numbers who can attend are quite low.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Teachers and support staff know their pupils well. Parents and pupils appreciate the good relationships and care for pupils' personal welfare. This gives them confidence to make progress in all aspects of their school life. Adequate attention is given to the personal needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Safeguarding procedures and others to ensure pupils' welfare and safety are robust. The school is well supported by outside agencies. Academic guidance is satisfactory. A rigorous tracking system has been introduced recently to help teachers track pupils' progress. The information is used appropriately to set targets in English, mathematics and science and to target groups of pupils who need additional support. This is beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards in English, mathematics and science but is not yet consistent across the school.

Pupils are not yet clear how their individual targets will help them improve their own work. This means that even though marking is detailed and pupils say it helps them, they do not always have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher is clear about what needs to be done to increase pupils' progress and he is extremely well supported by two consultant headteachers and the local authority. There are signs of improvement in the provision and standards of work this year. Staff are working well as a team to overcome the weaknesses in pupils' attainment caused by recent underachievement. There is a calm atmosphere in this well organised school. The school development plan identifies clearly what needs to be done to ensure achievement, standards and provision are improved. The drive to raise standards and to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is consistent throughout the school is already bringing improvement. The school has improved its tracking

and monitoring procedures and pupils' progress and achievement are more clearly monitored at regular 'progress meetings'. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have realistic plans for improving standards. They are relatively new to their areas of responsibility and need to develop their roles further in taking forward initiatives to drive school improvement. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they support it well but are not rigorous enough when challenging the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 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

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stow Heath Junior School, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3TT

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and coming to your assembly. We agree with you that Stow Heath is a friendly school and happy school. It is providing you with a satisfactory education.

These are the things that we found during our visit to your school:

- You make satisfactory progress and many of you now reach the expected standards for your age.
- You are taught satisfactorily.
- You enjoy school, behave well and like learning.
- You feel safe and well cared for.
- You take care presenting your work. It is usually neat and tidy.
- You especially like the residential trips.
- Those who need the extra help are well supported.
- Your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to make sure that the school continues to improve.

What we have asked the school to do next:

- Make sure that teachers always help you to do really well in lessons. We found that they could also get you to be more involved.
- Ensure that all teachers use targets well to help you have a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.
- Work closely with your parents to ensure that you all attend school regularly.
- Help teachers who are in charge of subjects to do more to make the school better.

You can all help your teachers make these improvements by continuing to work really hard. Please make sure that you are always in school unless you are unwell. Thank you for an enjoyable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely Marion Wallace Lead inspector