

Glenthorne Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124162
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314826
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Martin
Headteacher	Matthew Gould
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Glenthorne Drive Cheslyn Hay Walsall WS6 7BZ
Telephone number	01922 857000
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Virtually every pupil is from a White British background in this smaller-than-average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Some families experience social and economic disadvantages. When children start in Nursery their level of skills and knowledge is low.

The headteacher joined the school in September 2006 and at present there is no deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Glenthorne Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Improvements have been made to the quality of its work during the last two years, which parents recognise. They say that their children develop well as individuals because the staff are friendly, helpful and caring. Pupils' personal development is good and they are keen to learn. The quality of teaching has been improved and is satisfactory. This has helped to eliminate some of the inconsistencies in progress that was apparent in the past. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily and they reach standards that are just below average. Children in the Foundation Stage also achieve satisfactorily and are soundly prepared for the work in Year 1.

The headteacher has been successful in introducing more rigorous evaluation of the school's performance, although other staff are not yet fully involved in making the necessary checks. Leadership and management are therefore satisfactory. School self-evaluation is accurate and governors are playing an increasingly challenging role in making sure pupils' education is effective enough. School improvement priorities are clearly focused on what needs improving.

The curriculum is satisfactory and has some notable features. The programmes of out-of-school activities, especially sport and for French are particularly well developed. Basic skills are at the heart of the curriculum and recent improvements to the teaching of English are resulting in improved progress in reading and writing. Improvements in mathematics have been a bit slower and staff recognise that now is the time to focus on improvements in provision in this subject. At present, there is insufficient focus on mathematical investigations and not enough practical work in the subject. The information from assessment is not always used successfully enough to match work in all subjects to the needs of different ability groups.

Staff take good care of the pupils. The systems to safeguard pupils are thorough and meet government requirements. The relationship between staff and pupils is good. Parents say that the fairly small size of the school helps in creating a supportive approach to education that ensures their children are ready to learn and keen to succeed. Guidance on how to improve pupils' work is not as well developed as other aspects of care, guidance and support but improvements are planned to ensure pupils know what they must do next to reach their targets.

The pupils are at the heart of the school's caring ethos. They are well behaved, polite and sensible. They know a lot about keeping healthy and safe and try hard to live up to their knowledge of these things. Pupils enjoy their life in school and say their teachers make learning fun. They are prepared appropriately for the next stage of their education and life outside school.

Increasingly challenging targets are being set for pupils' achievement that are beginning to drive up standards. The time is ripe for these targets to be used more as the benchmark for judging the school's performance. Senior leaders acknowledge this need. Improvements to date have been positive. The school has satisfactory capacity to continue its advance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in Nursery and Reception is satisfactory. The children make the expected progress from their low starting points. Because there is so much ground to make up, many children have not reached the expected level of skills and knowledge by the time they join Year 1. Attainment in language and literacy is the weakest area, which has a profound impact on later

learning in English. The children build their speaking skills satisfactorily, although many still have significant speech difficulties when they leave Reception.

Teaching is satisfactory and children are given the necessary opportunities to learn both inside the classroom and outside. The outdoor areas are well resourced. Some activities are too controlled by staff, which rather restricts the development of children's independence and investigational skills. The children enjoy their learning and learn to work harmoniously with other children. The Foundation Stage is led and managed satisfactorily. There are appropriate plans for improvement, especially of assessment and the use made of the information it produces to set appropriately challenging work for the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharply define the role of senior leaders and ensure they are involved in the rigorous monitoring of school performance.
- Improve the use of information from assessment in setting work that is well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Make mathematics teaching and its curriculum more focused on practical and investigational learning.

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

Over the last few years, with a few ups and downs, attainment has hovered around the levels expected for the pupils' ages. This year, the school's tracking data shows that standards at the end of Year 6 are likely to be a little below average. This represents satisfactory progress since these pupils started school. At some times during their schooling, these pupils made faster progress than at others. This inconsistency in progress is being eliminated and younger pupils can look forward to a much smoother pathway. Increasingly challenging targets are leading to higher expectations among both the staff and the pupils. Parents approve of these steps forward.

Improvements to provision in English and specific initiatives to raise achievement in reading and writing have been successful. Pupils' much reduced starting levels in the different aspects of English, especially speaking and listening, are particularly noticeable. This means that in each year group there is a significant number of pupils who are not reaching the expected level of English skills and knowledge. These pupils have been targeted carefully and their progress has accelerated satisfactorily. Achievement in mathematics is rising, but at a slower rate than in English.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. School leaders realise the need to ensure that their learning programmes are more precise in identifying the steps they must take.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school works well to develop pupils' personal qualities. Pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given to work and play together and they know the rules that apply to behaviour, health and safety. They try hard to follow these rules, so behaviour is good, and pupils follow healthy and safe lifestyles. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to reflect on their learning and to appreciate what makes their lives happy, harmonious and enjoyable.

Pupils have responsibilities around school and opportunities to raise funds for charity that mean their awareness of others in the community is satisfactory. Attendance levels are a bit above average, which reflects pupils' keenness to be in school and the good enjoyment of learning that is evident.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory quality of teaching and learning reflects the success that the headteacher has had in raising expectations and increasing the challenges provided for the pupils. This greater demand has resulted in pockets of good teaching in some classes, especially in Reception and parts of Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given suitable work and teaching assistants work successfully to ensure they make satisfactory gains in their learning.

The headteacher continues to work for more improvement in the consistency of teaching. The information emerging from assessment is not used sufficiently well to set challenging enough work for pupils in the different ability groups. The monitoring of teaching is not geared enough to checking that work match is effective enough. Nonetheless, teaching is at least satisfactory in all classes and staff are keen to take the next steps to improve provision.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has a number of strengths that indicate that it is of securely satisfactory quality. Parents and pupils rate the programme of out-of-school activities highly. The residential stay and programme of visits to places such as Ragley Hall and Birmingham Botanical Gardens enrich pupils' learning well. The development of the school garden and attractive pond has resulted in a valuable resource that is used to enrich the study of science, design and technology, and art.

The school is ahead of most primary schools in the development of its programme of modern foreign languages. Parents are keen for their children to learn French and say that they are mastering the first steps well. Basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology are promoted satisfactorily but some learning is rooted too much in the use of worksheets, especially in the first half of school and in mathematics generally. The extension of basic skills, especially in writing, is not developed enough in subjects outside English. A start has been made to improve the focus on literacy in other subjects but work is not yet complete.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents and pupils are keen to emphasise the caring, family feeling in school and the contribution that this makes to care, guidance and support. Staff have good insights into the pupils' personal, social and health needs and systems to promote pupils' welfare are effective. The safeguarding of pupils is reliable. Good guidance is given to the very few pupils with behaviour problems and the school is a calm, harmonious and friendly community as a result. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported satisfactorily. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Most pupils know their targets and there are effective systems in place to show them how well they have achieved their goals. However, marking of pupils' work is not used to show the steps to be taken in order to reach the next level. The sometimes imperfect match of work to pupils' abilities means that not all pupils are pushed hard enough in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governors say that the playground 'has a new buzz' since the headteacher joined the school. They recognise how he has encouraged staff to raise their expectations and not to be satisfied with insufficiently challenging targets. Parents also pay tribute to the headteacher's high profile and determined approach to improvement. The school has moved forward since he came, although he is the first to recognise that there remain several key steps for the school to take to ensure it is fully effective.

The senior leadership team has settled well to its role of overall management of the school, although the rigorous monitoring of the quality of provision and pupils' achievement is not fully in place. Despite this, school self-evaluation is accurate. Governors have an increased understanding of how well pupils are achieving and what needs improving to ensure that their education is of good quality. Governors are learning more about the importance of their roles as agents for improvement and are confident and supportive in their work. There is general recognition that more precision is required in setting ever more challenging targets, measuring the school's success in relation to pupils' progress and ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' needs. Improvements in the last two years show the school has the necessary capacity to move ahead on these matters.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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

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 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

24 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Glenthorne Primary School, Cheslyn Hay, Walsall WS6 7BZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We were pleased that you told us a lot about your school, and how you enjoy your learning. We think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

In our report, we have written more about your school. These are the most important things we have included.

- You make satisfactory progress and reach slightly below-average standards by the time you leave school.
- Children in Nursery and Reception like school and are keen to find out about all the different things they work on.
- You behave well, take good care of each other and are kind and polite.
- Your lessons are interesting, as you said, and you are taught satisfactorily.
- You told us you enjoy the out-of-school activities, especially the sports, and that this helped you keep healthy.
- Teachers and other staff look after you carefully.
- Mr Gould has made some good improvements and has useful ideas for helping you to do even better in school.

Three things can be improved in order to make your school even better.

- Senior staff should check more often that you are learning successfully.
- Teachers should make sure that your work is always hard enough.
- Changes should be made to the way mathematics is taught so you have more chances to investigate and solve problems.

Because you told us you enjoy working with your teachers we know you will help them to make these improvements. As a start, you can tell your teacher how well you think you are learning and whether your work is hard or easy.

We wish you good luck in your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington Lead inspector

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