

St Chad's CofE (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124259
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314863
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Coxon
Headteacher	Tracey Coles
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	St Michael Road Lichfield WS13 6SN
Telephone number	01543 512000
Fax number	01543 512003

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the quality of teaching, learning and the progress made by learners in Key Stage 1 • the quality of assessment and use of targets; and • the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and school improvement planning. Evidence was gathered from observations of pupils at work and play, discussion with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of documentation and an analysis of parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves a local community comprising families living in favourable circumstances. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than typically seen in primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. There have been recent changes in senior staff, including the appointment of an acting deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Chad's is a good school in which pupils build outstanding personal and social skills and achieve well academically because of the good provision made for them. Pupils show extremely positive attitudes to learning, behave very sensibly and show kindness and consideration to one another. This results in a harmonious school in which mutually respectful relationships underpin the pupils' successful learning. The Building Learning Power Programme helps them tackle new experiences with a 'can do' attitude that also fosters high levels of self-esteem and self-worth. Pupils' excellent attendance is testament to the enormous enjoyment they gain from the well-planned and interesting lessons and the exciting curriculum that is generally well tailored to meeting personal needs. The International Award in recognition of the school's links with partner schools in Cyprus and Turkey, and its involvement in a 'Sporting Partnership' with local schools, are just two of the 'extras' on offer to pupils and demonstrate the school's clear commitment to community cohesion.

Children make a good start to school in the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to achieve well and reach standards that are above the level expected for their age by the end of Year 6. School data show that the picture in English and science is slightly more positive than in mathematics. Pupils' progress varies from year to year but is good overall across all three subjects. More-able pupils tend to make more consistent progress in English than in mathematics. This is particularly the case in Year 2, where there is not a consistent level of challenge. An over-reliance on worksheets in this year group is hindering the more able pupils from making more rapid progress in mathematics. Additionally, the lack of organisation in pupils' recording in this subject limits teachers' ability to check whether the more able pupils are making the good progress expected of them.

Good teaching is enabling most pupils to develop good basic skills. Classrooms are well resourced with good quality displays that pupils draw on readily to support their learning. The deployment of teaching assistants to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in group or independent tasks is a positive feature. However, their involvement in supporting teaching and learning at the start of lessons is not always as active as it could be. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Encouraging and diagnostic marking in books and the use of challenging personal targets is much more consistent in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 and means that older pupils having a clearer understanding of how well they are doing and how to aim higher. In addition, the school's use of skills ladders to assess pupils' progress in writing and guide their next learning steps offers a model of good practice, which is successfully supporting learning. This practice has yet to be transferred to mathematics and is another reason why progress is not quite as strong as in English.

Pastoral care is outstanding and is the reason for pupils' outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Staff know the pupils very well and are extremely responsive to their needs. Pupils say how safe they feel at school because 'staff listen to them and help out if there are any worries.' They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe themselves. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked with a road safety team. They walked a route around the school, identified potential hazards and then devised a personal safety strategy to overcome them. Pupils are also extremely alert about how to keep healthy and recognise the importance of a balanced diet and plenty of exercise. Members of the school council, who are excellent ambassadors for their school, commented that the residential outward-bound experience to Chase Water was a great opportunity to improve personal fitness, whilst camping

at Shugborough in Year 6 was 'simply the best.' Pupils' successful running of the school bank, which attracts many 'savers,' is a highly successful venture that acts as a powerful vehicle to help pupils become very financially aware. Coupled with an excellent understanding of democratic processes, pupils are being extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being.

The headteacher's very good leadership is the main driving force behind the school's many successes. Her style is very 'hands on'; she knows the school inside out and, together with the acting deputy headteacher, has worked effectively to move the school forward since its last inspection. Despite the recent turnover of staff, the school has sustained a good level of effectiveness and has the capacity to continue to do so. This is because staff are a strong team, reflective about their practice and keen to share ideas in the pupils' best interests. The school improvement plan usefully shows a strong focus on developing pupils' confidence to tackle new skills as part of the Building Learning Power Programme, and improving assessment. However, it is not specific enough in identifying how improvement in teaching, standards and achievement can be measured and evaluated. Governance is good. Through subject links and ongoing training, governors are further developing their monitoring and evaluation roles. They have worked very effectively with school managers to secure the Financial Management Standard, which is testament to their very effective budget control, financial management systems and pursuit of best value.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start in Reception with skills and abilities which are similar to those of others of their age. The school assesses quickly those children with learning difficulties. Good links with a range of agencies are used to respond effectively to their needs. Further improvement in resources is anticipated, through the Community Learning Partnership, to help the increasing number of children requiring speech therapy. Children settle quickly into school because of a well-planned induction programme. A secure home partnership supports this with plans to extend further the links with parents and carers. The children are taught well and because of this make good progress in meeting their early learning goals, and are well prepared to start work on the National Curriculum when they transfer to Year 1. The teaching team works very well together and is particularly successful in helping the children to build independence and confidence to 'have a go' at new things. It is noticeable just how much the children enjoy learning together because the activities are well organised, with a good balance of adult-led learning and children working independently. The strong emphasis on letters and sounds is helping children develop their reading and writing skills steadily. During the inspection, children worked well on learning in the outdoor area painting 'beautiful flowers' whilst others went on a maths trail or explored volume and capacity as they filled various containers with coloured water. The space available for outdoor play is generous, with the staff having some good ideas about how to extend its use and make it more freely available to the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve marking and the use of targets in Key Stage 1 and ensure that there is a consistent level of challenge in the mathematics work set for more-able learners in Year 2.
- Sharpen the school development plan so that there are precise targets for improving teaching, standards and achievement against which progress and impact can be measured.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

8 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Chad's CE (VC) Primary School, Lichfield WS1 6SN

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed chatting to you and especially meeting with the school council. They told me that St Chad's is 'a good school that has a family feel, is a happy place in which everyone is helped to do their best and enjoy being there.' They are right! These are the things I found that I would like to share with you.

- The standards that you reach at the end of school are typically above those expected for your age and you do well to reach them from your different starting points.
- Your behaviour and care for one another and first-rate attitudes to learning are a joy to see and your personal achievements are outstanding.
- The adults who look after you at school know you very well and this helps you feel safe and confident to 'have a go' at new things and really enjoy coming to school.
- Your high-level enthusiasm for adopting safe and healthy lifestyles shows how keen you are to make sensible decisions. This is also true of the way you get involved in supporting your school and wider community. Having your own school bank is an excellent way of experiencing workplace skills and your understanding of business.
- Because you are well taught, you learn successfully and make good progress. One or two of you in Year 2 who are high fliers in maths could be challenged more, so please let your teachers know if you want harder work.
- The school provides you with lots of interesting things to do. Many of you told me about your favourite subjects. It was good to see so much interesting artwork around the school. I really enjoyed looking at the 'masterpieces' in Reception!
- Most of you in Key Stage 2 know your personal targets. These, together with teachers' helpful marking, are enabling you to focus on what you need to do next to move forward. This is not the case for Key Stage 1 pupils in mathematics. I have asked the staff to share their best ideas to help improve things.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well and, with all staff and governors, is doing a good job in moving the school forward. I have asked them to make sure that their plans for improvement are easier to check.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Field Lead inspector

8 May 2008

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