

The William Amory Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131073
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	315708
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Burton
Headteacher	Ross Martin
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stallington Road Blythe Bridge Stoke on Trent ST11 9PN
Telephone number	01782 394900
Fax number	01782 394900

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The William Amory Primary School is a newly amalgamated, smaller-than-average primary school. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The William Amory Primary School provides a satisfactory education. It has a number of strengths as well as areas to improve. The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning are satisfactory but there are notable inconsistencies. In particular, planning does not always take into account the results of assessment, which means work is not matched to the differing abilities of pupils, and this slows their learning. Standards in writing across some year groups are lower than in reading and pupils make slower progress in this area because there are too few opportunities to write at length or for sustained periods. Standards in mathematics and science are average throughout the school, with the rate of pupils' progress gradually improving. Most pupils make broadly satisfactory progress between the time they enter the school and the time they leave it. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady progress because of effective provision. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. They offer and discuss opinions confidently. Pupils' personal development, including their sound spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is well supported by assemblies, the personal, social and health education lessons and religious education. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good provision where a range of clubs, visits and visitors extends pupils' experiences. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher shows a strong commitment to the school, making sound progress in bringing the two schools together and in steering the new school through a very unsettled time. The new senior team is becoming cohesive and, as a result, the school runs smoothly and has the capacity to sustain further improvement. However, there has been a delay by governors and senior leaders in ratifying and implementing some key policies and procedures. Governors are supportive but their role of holding the school to account is not well developed. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are not focused enough to secure swift improvement. The school improvement plan demonstrates that the school is taking some appropriate actions to accelerate pupils' progress. However, timescales lack the necessary urgency.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. When children start school, standards are mostly in line with the expected starting points for their age. A key strength of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is teamwork, where the children receive effective help from adults who engage them in conversation to promote their speaking and listening skills and to challenge their thinking. Adults observe and record progress carefully so that they can base the next steps in learning on what pupils know and can do, reporting progress regularly to parents. Children quickly learn routines, show positive attitudes towards learning and most enjoy school. They make satisfactory progress in their understanding of number and in their physical development. The outside area is insufficiently developed and underused. Methodical teaching of letter sounds provides pupils with a firm foundation as emergent readers and writers. Children have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the world. They show interest in information and communication technology (ICT) and know how to operate simple equipment. Their creative development is good. They are able to explore what happens when they mix colours and understand that different media can be combined. This is evident in the vibrant painting of their clay rainbow fish.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers always provide pupils with suitably challenging work and make effective use of the information produced by assessment to ensure that the next steps in learning are carefully planned.
- Ensure that governors adopt a unified and systematic approach to holding the school to account and tackling some urgent outstanding tasks.
- Improve the rigour with which school improvement planning and self-evaluation activities are carried out. 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

Achievement is broadly satisfactory, with pupils attaining average standards in mathematics and science across the school. Results in English, especially in writing in the 2007 Key Stage 2 national tests, were exceptionally low when compared with the national picture, with all pupils making inadequate progress. This is due, in some part, to the turbulence the school has experienced and to pupils being given insufficient opportunities to write for sustained periods. Constructive changes in provision have begun to arrest further decline. Consequently, pupils are now achieving broadly satisfactorily, with standards beginning to rise. The management of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective. Good quality individual education plans provide pupils with very clear, easily measurable targets that allow achievement to be carefully monitored. This, together with effective support from teaching assistants, ensures that these pupils make sound progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning and have a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They behave appropriately in class and in the playground. Pupils say there is little bullying and that any incidents are dealt with firmly and fairly and, as a result, pupils feel safe. The pupils know about their local community and have some sense of the wider world, appreciating that there are people who have a different faith or religion. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the wider community. Some pupils are beginning to be active school councillors. Their work is starting to have positive effects. For example, the pupils' charitable works, such as the 'Shoebox' scheme, supports children in other countries who are less fortunate than themselves. Some older pupils act as 'buddies' to those younger to good effect.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Strengths in teaching are the positive relationships that staff have with the pupils and their effective use of regular praise and encouragement to motivate them. Teachers know what they want the pupils to learn and make it clear to them. However, expectations in small minority of

lessons are too low, with the pace of working too leisurely and pupils not stimulated by work that they find easy to complete. This lessens the challenge for the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The wide range of clubs that involve girls as well as boys makes a positive contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Visitors to school, including local police, help to support and extend pupils' learning. Visits, such as those to places of worship, reinforce pupils' classroom activities and further develops their skills. Residential visits by Year 6 deepen confidence and independence in pupils. The school is beginning to adjust the curriculum to provide better breadth and balance. Effective use of interactive whiteboards enables pupils to illustrate their understanding of subjects. For example, they show others how to calculate numbers. Computing equipment is outdated and this impedes pupils' development of skills in ICT. There are suitable plans to remedy this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support. This helps them to grow in confidence and develop caring attitudes. Pupils feel safe because staff encourage them to talk about any problems that they may have. Teachers make good use of outside agency support to provide for individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Class teachers are closely involved in the provision made for these pupils. Nevertheless, many of the systems to give support are only just being implemented. Academic guidance makes insufficient use of assessment data to ensure pupils know what they need to learn next or to provide sharp individual targets for improvement. There are some good examples of targetsetting and analytical marking but these are inconsistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is resolute in its efforts to raise standards. Nevertheless, progress has not been as swift as it could be, owing in part to staffing difficulties and issues not fully resolved from the amalgamation. Most parents speak well of the school. Nonetheless, the inspection took note of a few strongly expressed parental concerns, about behaviour and staffing difficulties, and balanced these against the pupils' positive views and what inspectors observed during their visit. The school is well aware that it has many more improvements to make, including improving the rigour with which it carries out its improvement planning and self-evaluation. Subject leadership in English, mathematics, science and ICT is broadly satisfactory with teachers having a reasonable understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses in their subject.

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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	No
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?	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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

7 November 2007 Dear Pupils, Inspection of William Amory Primary School, Stallington Road, Blythe Bridge, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST11 9PN Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk to you and your teachers about how well you are doing. We thought you would like to know what we have said about your school. Overall, we decided it was a satisfactory school. You behave appropriately and you are kind and considerate to each other. You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is better than in many other schools. In lessons, we think you listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you try hard to do your best. It was good to see that some of you are becoming involved in school life. Many of you take on extra responsibilities such as becoming playground monitors during breaktime. We were pleased to see how well you play together at playtime. We have made some suggestions to make your school get even better. We have asked the teachers to look more closely at how they teach English, mathematics and science to make sure that everyone is given work of the right difficulty. Finally, we have recommended that the teachers and the governors should work together to keep a more detailed check on how well the school is doing, to help them make things better still. This is a new school where there are still lots of things to do. You, together with your teachers and governors, can make it a school to be proud of. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can. We wish you well in the future. Jacqueline Wordsworth Her Majesty's inspector

7 November 2007

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Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's inspector