

Stowlawn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104317
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	336284
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	David Shears

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 of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Hill
Headteacher	Sue Vaughan
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
School address	Green Park Avenue Stowlawn Bilston
Telephone number	01902 556463
Fax number	01902 558145
Email address	s.vaughan@stowlawn-pri.lppplus.net

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, saw nine teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at policies, planning, assessment data and pupils' work. They analysed the questionnaires returned by 37 parents and carers, 86 pupils and 19 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of pupils in mathematics across the school and in writing at Key Stage 2 and how well these skills are practised through the curriculum
- the use of assessment to ensure sufficient challenge
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in identifying, monitoring and evaluating the provision to ensure better progress
- the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage to determine whether provision and management is enabling children to make good progress.

Information about the school

Stowlawn is an average sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a few from a range of other ethnic backgrounds, mostly of Asian origin. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. Their needs are mostly moderate learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language; although very few are at the early stages of learning English. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made up of one Nursery class and one Reception class. There is a breakfast club available on site that is managed by the governing body, although attendance is very low. The provision was not running during the inspection as it was not required. The school has been awarded the silver Arts mark. The school has moved to a new site in this academic year.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Stowlawn Primary provides a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory through the school, although they make better progress in some year groups, notably Year 2 and Year 6. The progress pupils make reflects the quality of teaching that they receive. Through effective tracking of pupils' progress, teachers have a clear understanding of what levels the pupils are reaching. However, this is not always used effectively enough to plan lessons that are challenging, particularly for the more able pupils, because expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, on the other hand, are identified early and given appropriate support by teaching assistants who ensure that they make satisfactory progress. Pupils have a sound knowledge of their targets, although these are not consistently referred to in lessons. Marking is completed and teachers give positive comments about work, although pupils are not always shown what needs to be done to improve their attainment. Core skills that are learnt, particularly in mathematics and writing, are not practised enough across the curriculum to ensure that they are securely embedded and applied.

The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. They have a good understanding of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep themselves safe. In particular, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because pupils have a wide variety of opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures and faiths. The school looks after its pupils well, giving them good support and pastoral care.

Leaders and managers have successfully managed the move of the school to new premises during the year and already pupils have settled well into their new environment. Leaders have evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development well and have worked hard to improve the provision in the school. This is carefully monitored in a variety of ways including observing lessons. However, comments generally focus on teaching, rather than the learning seen, which means the impact of the teaching can be missed. In particular, leaders and managers have concentrated their efforts in improving the literacy provision across the school. As a result there have been notable gains in the progress of pupils in linking sounds and letters in the Early Years Foundation Stage, improvement of both reading and writing skills at Key Stage 1 and development of these skills, particularly in the last two years at Key Stage 2. This has resulted in literacy skills that are average by the time pupils leave the school. The school has rightly identified the need to improve mathematics, which still lags behind, particularly in Years 1 to 6, and this is planned to be their focus during the next academic year. However, overall attainment is now broadly average. Attendance has

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been low, with persistent absence too high. However, the school has demonstrated an improvement in attendance and has drastically reduced the amount of persistent absence so that it is now broadly average. These initiatives demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. Relatively new middle managers have been appointed and are beginning to support the senior leaders in continuing to make improvements. As yet, there is limited evidence of their leadership skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress, particularly in mathematics throughout the school, and in writing in Years 3 and 4 so that attainment is consistently in line with national expectations by the time pupils leave in Year 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
 - assessment is used more effectively to provide high levels of challenge, particularly for the more able
 - targets are referred to in lessons so that pupils know what they have to achieve
 - marking consistently shows pupils the next steps in their learning
 - core skills learnt in mathematics and writing are consistently practised across the wider curriculum.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that monitoring activities have a clear focus on the quality of learning
 - developing the leadership skills of the new middle managers.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

From comparatively low starting points, pupils generally make satisfactory progress across the school so that by the time they leave their attainment is broadly average. There is a clear trend of improvement in Key Stage 1 in reading and writing and although attainment in mathematics is lower there are early signs that this too is improving. At Key Stage 2 the progress overall dips in Years 3 and 4 but improves again in Year 5 and particularly in Year 6 where pupils make good progress in all areas. Their progress in reading is good and attainment in writing has much improved this year. Girls and boys and those from other ethnic backgrounds, including Asian pupils, make progress similar to that of their peers.

Pupils feel safe in school and have good relationships with their teachers, who make lessons interesting for them. As a result they enjoy lessons, and behaviour is good overall, both in lessons and at break times. In lessons, pupils generally concentrate well but the pace of learning for the more able drops when work is insufficiently challenging. Pupils know what the aim of a lesson is, but generally do not show independence by

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referring to their own individual targets. They work well together and show they can reflect on their learning. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community, including having input into the building of the new school. Many pupils have a variety of responsibilities. They have arranged fund raising activities to support both the school and outside charities. Pupils from the school are involved with the City Action Zone School Council, debating issues relating to the schools in the area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Writing and mathematics skills are sometimes used in other subjects but there is no planned programme to develop them in this way or to make sure they are practised at the right level. However there are many other opportunities for pupils to enjoy learning across different subjects. For example, a wide variety of visitors to the school share their expertise including drumming, learnt by KS2 pupils. Visits, including two residential experiences, are used effectively to enhance learning as well as to widen pupils' cultural understanding. Personal, social and health education, art and music are particular strengths and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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improving. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards to support teaching and raise interest. There are some opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, particularly in speaking and listening and ICT. Lesson plans outline specific learning objectives for each lesson that are explained well to pupils. Teaching is generally clear but occasionally opportunities to extend pupils' learning are missed, particularly at the end of lessons. Transition arrangements are good. They ensure that pupils feel secure when moving from one key stage to the next or moving on to secondary education. The support for pupils moving onto special schools is particularly strong. The care of pupils for whom circumstances make them vulnerable is effective, with a good range of intervention strategies. This has ensured that they have made good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem. This is beginning to have an impact on their academic progress. The procedures for promoting attendance have been highly successful; the number of pupils with persistent absence has greatly reduced.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school' strengths and areas for development. A school improvement plan highlights these and shows positive actions to make improvements. These actions are evaluated every term to show the progress that the school is making in achieving these. The result is a satisfactory direction and staff are committed to the drive for improvement. Governors are very supportive and are willing to help. They are developing their understanding of the school's attainment and progress to enable them to give stronger challenge.

The school promotes equality satisfactorily. It tracks the progress of pupils well and this information is used to target those who are in danger of underachieving. These pupils receive extra support and as a result the school ensures that those who are vulnerable participate well and make satisfactory progress. Safeguarding arrangements are well developed throughout the school. In particular, procedures within the new building demonstrate good practice and staff are diligent in ensuring that pupils are kept safe both in school and out on trips. The school provides very well for its pupils to enable them to know how to stay safe in a wide range of situations. These include the teaching of internet safety, knife crime, a 'Respect' programme and neighbourhood watch, some of which are delivered by the local police. There is a strong focus on community cohesion, particularly within the school and local area. For example, the school is

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involved with the Mount Everest Project and is using this to enrich the curriculum, while raising money for a local hospice. International links continue to be developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well into the Nursery because there are good induction arrangements that establish good links with parents and carers and help children to feel secure within the school environment. The children enjoy learning through both Nursery and Reception; they make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in targeted areas, namely linking sounds and letters and personal and social education. Routines are well established and the balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities is appropriate. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and together with those at the early stages of learning English, are given appropriate support. Observations and assessments give good insight into the progress of individual children, but the resulting information is not always used effectively to provide the right level of challenge, particularly for the more able. The outdoor provision gives opportunity for children to choose whether to work inside or outdoors although, due to the small size of the covered area, provision is limited during inclement weather, affecting variety and independence at these times.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with their child's experience in school. However, some questionnaires from parents or carers listed individual concerns. A few questionnaires say that the school does not take enough account of parents' and carers' worries or state they do not receive enough information or support about the progress of their children. Some say that their children are not making enough progress. However, inspectors found that there is a good range of opportunities for parents and carers to share their thoughts and receive support, and examined examples of where changes have been made as a result, such as issues regarding the new building. Although there was some concern on a few questionnaires regarding poor behaviour, there was no evidence of this on the inspection. Inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress, although the progress of some pupils, particularly the more able could be better.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stowlawn Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	49	17	46	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	59	14	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	43	17	46	3	8	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	27	23	62	1	3	3	8
The teaching is good at this school	13	35	21	57	1	3	2	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	41	18	49	2	5	2	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	41	21	57	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	38	19	51	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	27	23	62	1	3	2	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	27	20	54	6	16	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	27	20	54	6	16	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	12	32	19	51	3	8	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	43	19	51	1	3	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stowlawn Primary School, Bilston, WV14 6EH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and watching you work and play together.

You are very lucky to be going to school in a brand new building, which gives you lots of new opportunities. We enjoyed watching you doing various activities at lunchtime. We were very impressed with the way you behave in school. You have a good understanding of what it is to be healthy and know lots about how to keep safe both in school and out. We were pleased to see that your school's attendance is improving because you are trying to always be in school unless you are too ill. Keep up the good work!

We found that you are making satisfactory progress in your learning and that your literacy work is getting better. Well done! We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all make better progress in mathematics and for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to improve their writing skills. One thing you can do is practise these skills carefully, even in other subjects. We particularly want the more able pupils to be given a higher level of challenge. You could help by telling your teacher if you know the work is too easy for you. We have also asked that your teachers keep reminding you of your targets and use marking to help you understand how to improve.

We have asked your senior leaders to check up how well you are learning in lessons and to share their responsibility with other teachers so that everyone will be able to focus on you making the best progress that you can.

Thank you again for a lovely two days. We wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

David Shears

Lead inspector

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