

Stow Heath Infant School, Nursery, Resource Area for Complex Needs and The Rainbow Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104323
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	336286
Inspection dates	7–8 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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Batchelor
Headteacher	Vivienne Bunce
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, saw 10 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 32 parents and carers and 22 members of staff.

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

- the quality of learning for pupils, particularly White British boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the more-able pupils
- the use of assessment to ensure that all lessons meet the needs of pupils
- how well targets and marking are used to help pupils know the next steps in their learning
- how successfully leaders and managers are tackling identified areas to ensure better provision and progress, and improved attendance.

Information about the school

Stow Heath is a larger-than-average infant school. The large majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. A small number are 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. The school has a resource base specifically for pupils with complex needs. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language, with a small proportion at the early stages of learning English. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made up of one Nursery class and two Reception classes. Care is provided by the Rainbow Children's Centre, catering for children from six months to four years during the day and providing before- and after-school care for pupils up to eight years. The governing body manages this provision. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status, Active Mark and Arts Mark Gold.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Stow Heath is a satisfactory school. Children who attend the children's centre make a good start and, because of the improvements made in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they continue to make good progress there, entering Year 1 with attainment that is broadly within national expectations. However, in Years 1 and 2, their progress slows because the quality of teaching they receive is no better than satisfactory and, as a result, they make satisfactory progress. Attainment on leaving Year 2 is significantly below the national average overall, although, because of the improving picture in the early years, it has risen this year, reaching average levels. Attainment in the complex needs base is well below average because of the pupils' particular needs, although they make good progress from low starting points.

Teachers have good relationships with pupils, who respond well with good behaviour and positive attitudes towards their work. Clear assessment procedures are established to show the current attainment of individuals. However, this information is not always used carefully enough to ensure that there is sufficient challenge in lessons, particularly for more-able pupils. Although pupils know what is expected of them during lessons, they do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is developing well, with a good focus on enrichment activities, which are much enjoyed. However, teachers do not make the most of these opportunities for pupils to practise their core skills in literacy and numeracy. The care of pupils is a strength of the school. Much effort is put into ensuring that pupils feel safe and secure. They know who to speak to if they have a problem and feel confident that adults can help. This good provision results in pupils' good personal development. Pupils display good behaviour and they care for each other well. For example, some act as playground leaders, distributing and collecting equipment. Pupils make a good contribution to the school through the school council and by checking the quality of each other's lunches, and also to the wider community where they have helped with picking up litter and singing to local residents. Although the attendance of pupils is still too low, the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent has quickly reduced as a result of a clear focus in improving attendance for these pupils. The school has a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils and challenge their parents over absence rates, but too many families still take holidays during the school term, limiting the overall attendance. Leaders and managers have correctly identified the strengths and areas for development in the school. However, the school development plan tries to focus on too many initiatives at once. This can result in improvements not being sufficiently addressed. For example, the progress of White British boys has been identified as an area to improve, and some measures have been put into place to support this, such as increased

resources. However, monitoring has not been focused enough to check whether these are proving successful. Nevertheless, there have been improvements. The children's centre is a strength of the school, where good links with parents are established. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved so that children are now making good progress and this is beginning to have an impact on the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2. The provision for pupils in the complex needs base is good. This demonstrates that leaders drive improvement satisfactorily and, consequently, the school's capacity to secure further improvements is also satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attendance by broadening still further its strategies to engage parents of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Raise the quality of teaching and improve the progress of pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, so that all groups of pupils, including White British boys and the more able, achieve as well as they can by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to ensure a better match of work to the ability of pupils, particularly the more able
 - developing targets and effective marking to help pupils understand their next steps in learning
 - using the curriculum to engage all groups of pupils, so that they enjoy practising their core skills of literacy and numeracy.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - involving leaders and managers at all levels in focussing on major priorities to ensure a more consistent approach in making sustained improvements in provision and progress
 - ensuring that monitoring relates to the school's priorities and, in particular, evaluating the quality of pupils' learning.
- 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

Children are now making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage although, in Years 1 and 2, progress remains satisfactory. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities mirrors this picture. White British pupils lag behind their peers and those learning English as an additional language are making better progress than their peers. Nevertheless, attainment at the end of Year 2 is beginning to rise this year, because of the good start that pupils have had. The notably improving progress that pupils are making means that achievement is satisfactory. Although more-able pupils make the same progress as other groups, lessons demonstrate that they are not challenged enough to reach their full potential. For example, pupils in Year

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2, working on multiplication were not challenged to solve problems. Pupils in the complex needs base make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress in relation to their ability, particularly in communicating, speaking and listening and in their early reading skills. They become more cooperative and engage more readily in learning.

Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They are able to name healthy elements in lunchboxes and know that sleep is important to stay alert during the day. They recognise the need to take regular exercise. There are opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual understanding through assemblies and visits to places of worship. Diversity days support the pupils' cultural development and pupils have a good sense of right and wrong, enhancing their moral and social skills. Children in the children's centre grow in confidence and self-esteem as they engage with activities and develop positive relationships with adults. Their behaviour is good. Pupils' good outcomes in personal development, alongside their improving academic progress, ensure that their economic well-being is satisfactory.

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	4
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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

Lessons all have a clear objective so that pupils know what they are going to learn. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and concepts are carefully taught. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard as a teaching aid and, as a result, pupils listen well and enjoy opportunities to participate. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils, both in the teaching part of the lesson and when they are working independently. However, the tasks that pupils are given are not always sufficiently challenging, particularly for more-able pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to share their own assessment of their work, although this is not consistent across the school. Teaching is good in the complex needs base where lessons are planned carefully, keeping in mind the small steps that pupils need to make. Routines are used well to help pupils feel secure enough to have a go at new things. There is excellent use of praise and good use of signs and symbols to support communication. In the children's centre, there is a good emphasis on speaking and listening, which is a weakness when children first join. Individual learning journeys show children's progress in all areas.

The curriculum is planned using a thematic approach. The varied activities provided engage and enthuse pupils. They especially enjoy the visits outside school and special visitors to the school. The school has recognised that it has not always fully met the needs of all groups of pupils, including White British boys, and resources have already been purchased with this in mind. There are creative links across subjects, although these are not strong enough in some areas, such as the practising of core skills in literacy and numeracy. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including karate, sewing, choir, gardening, signing and French, to appeal to pupils with a variety of interests.

There are good induction arrangements for children starting school. The transition arrangements between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, and for pupils moving to the junior school, are good. The children's centre provides a good level of care, enabling children to begin developing confidence and self-esteem. This includes the good provision of care before and after school, where pupils engage in a range of play activities in a safe environment. There is a high regard for pupils' welfare. Older pupils feel that the adults around them care for them, with one pupil commenting, 'This school helps us with our problems.' A diary room has been created for pupils to go to when they are feeling cross or anxious, and here they have the opportunity to talk their feelings through with a member of staff. Pupils for whom circumstances make them vulnerable, including those in the complex needs base, receive well-tailored support and the school makes good use of outside agencies to enhance and enrich their provision.

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

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

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

Pastoral care is a strength of leadership and management; there is a tangible sense that all are valued regardless of their age or ability. There are good arrangements for keeping pupils safe and staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures. The health and well-being of pupils are monitored and risk assessments are clearly written and followed.

Leaders have clear assessment procedures to track the progress of all pupils, including a variety of groups, and this is communicated to staff. However, this tracking information is not consistently used to impact on the learning in the classroom. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. However, its monitoring does not sufficiently focus on specific areas, limiting its effectiveness. The school has good information about the progress of different groups of pupils and is beginning to work towards ensuring that they all make better progress, promoting satisfactory equality of opportunity. The school promotes community cohesion well. An audit of the provision has been completed and an action plan implemented. This is already showing an impact, with pupils having a positive understanding of community cohesion, both locally and wider afield. The school is beginning to develop more global links to increase pupils' awareness of the international community.

The leadership of both the children's centre and the complex needs base is good. There are opportunities for staff development to continue improvements to a provision that already cares well for children and enables them to make good progress in line with their age and ability.

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
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have the opportunity to make a good start in their education through the children's centre. They join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below expectations. Because of the improved provision and the good teaching they receive, children now make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time children move into Year 1, their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Assessment is used well to plan activities that meet the needs of children, and all six areas of learning are evident both indoors and outside. There are good links with parents and carers which enable children to settle quickly and enjoy learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and given appropriate support. There are good links with the children's centre and the complex needs base, although the accommodation limits their effectiveness in working together. This has been identified by the school and building work is underway to improve this.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive in their views of the school. One parent had a concern about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. While inspectors agree that there are a few pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, staff manage behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Stow Heath Infant School, Nursery and Resource Areas 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 280 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	88	4	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	81	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	66	11	34	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	69	10	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	72	9	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	72	9	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	66	11	34	0	0	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)	21	66	11	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	50	16	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	53	13	41	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	63	11	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	69	10	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	81	5	16	0	0	0	0

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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stow Heath Infant School, Nursery, Resource Area for Complex Needs and The Rainbow Children's Centre, Willenhall, WV13 3UD

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited you recently. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school.

You told us that you like your school and we can easily see why. Your teachers care very much about you and help you to feel safe and secure. We were pleased that you have a good understanding of how to be healthy and how well you work and play together. We noticed that you are learning a lot about how different people live and what they believe in. We enjoyed visiting the children's centre and the complex needs base and seeing the good progress the children make.

We found that you go to a satisfactory school. We have asked your teachers to make sure that the older pupils make the same good progress as the younger ones in Nursery and Reception. To do this we have asked that your teachers make sure that the work challenges you all. You can help by telling your teachers if you find the work too easy. We would like you to practise what you learn in literacy and mathematics in other subjects too. We have also asked for your teachers to tell you what you need to do next to make your work even better.

Your school have been working on many different things and we have asked the school leaders to concentrate on the more important ones and check that they are working well.

It is important that you all come to school every day, when you are not too ill, so we would like your school to make sure that you all do that. You can help by letting your mummy and daddy know how important you think school is.

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

Yours sincerely

David Shears

Lead inspector

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