

Northwood Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134720
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	328959
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	375
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Nightingale
Headteacher	Gillian Morris
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Collingwood Road Wolverhampton WV10 8DS
Telephone number	01902 558715
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school currently has 10 pupils in its 25-place resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Their needs mainly relate to speech, language and communication difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or autism. These pupils are integrated throughout the school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into one of the two Reception classes. The school is part of the Excellence in Cities Transformed mini Education Action Zone.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The headteacher's clear aspirations and sense of purpose, recognised in the previous inspection report, have transformed the school. Her passion for improvement is shared by the senior management team. They set high expectations and have worked hard to improve standards, achievement and behaviour and to raise the school's profile within the community. Parents recognise this and are very supportive of the school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'This school has made great progress... things have changed for the better... it's all down to the hard work and determination of the headteacher and her staff.'

Children enter the school with very low skills and knowledge, particularly in speech and language. The good progress they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues throughout the school. Standards in Years 1 to 4 have increased steadily year-on-year, but it is in Years 5 and 6 where progress has been most dramatic. Strong tracking systems ensure that underachievement is quickly identified and well-planned strategies are promptly implemented to sustain improvement. Although pupils reach standards that are below the national average by the end of Year 6, this represents good progress from such a low starting point. Support for pupils within the resource unit is outstanding and this equips pupils for a smooth integration into their classes. Teaching is good overall. Pupils like and respect their teachers and want to do their best. Relationships are good and teachers work hard to ensure that what they teach matches the learning needs of the pupils. However, there are occasions when teachers talk for too long, the pace of learning slows and pupils' interest wanes. In addition, the most capable pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, especially in Key Stage 1.

The school is a thriving, harmonious community which promotes aspiration and celebrates achievement. Pupils are aware of their role within the school, local and wider communities and the similarities and differences between them. This contributes to the school's satisfactory promotion of community cohesion. Pupils appreciate the many clubs that the school has to offer and the good curriculum promotes their personal development well. However, pupils do not always get enough opportunities to use their initiative and take responsibility for their learning. Relationships are good throughout the school. Consequently, pupils behave well, enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes towards school and their work. Attendance is improving and is now average because of the school's effective measures to raise the level. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe. Pastoral care is good. Pupils are confident that staff will help them when problems arise. Systems are securely in place to ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school, and to support those who are vulnerable or have particular needs. Strong links with local agencies are used effectively to enhance provision for pupils' welfare and to extend opportunities for learning. Academic guidance is good. In most lessons, pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve but do not always have a clear understanding of their targets in learning or their progress towards these targets.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because stringent systems check how well the school is doing. All staff share the same view and are very supportive of the senior leaders who are skilled at implementing strategies for improvement. Together with governors, they have worked hard as a team to make good improvement since the last inspection and therefore have a good capacity for further development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes because the warm, welcoming learning environment provides children with the security that they need to become happy, confident learners. Leadership is good and fully committed to helping children progress. Careful observations and good assessment procedures give staff a clear picture of the children's strengths and needs. This is important because children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with low levels of skills and knowledge for children of their age. Good teaching helps children to build secure foundations in their learning so that they make rapid progress and achieve well. Parents are full of praise for how well their children are doing. One parent's comment, typical of many, was, 'My son has settled in very well... as parents we are kept very well informed... his reading is exceptional.'

Children's physical, social and emotional needs are cared for effectively. They are constantly reassured and this helps them to sustain concentration even when the task is hard. Although the use of the well-resourced outside area and opportunities for children to initiate activities are often limited to certain parts of the day, the curriculum is well planned and supports the good progress that they make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consistently engage and challenge all pupils in lessons, particularly the more able, and involve them more actively in their learning.
- Provide more opportunities for all pupils to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning, and develop a clearer understanding of their learning targets and their progress in achieving them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children enter the school at a very low base with limited social and language skills. Although teachers' assessments in 2008 show that standards at the end of Year 2 were well below average in all subjects, pupils had made good progress from such a low base. However, few of the more able pupils reach the higher standards of which they are capable. The school quickly recognised that writing needed to become a focus in Years 1 and 2. Inspection evidence and school data show that the success of the strategies introduced by the school is already being reflected in an increase in pupils' progress.

By the time pupils reach Year 6, standards have improved and are below average. Pupils' progress has accelerated notably over the last three years because of improvement in the quality of teaching. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good overall and ensures that they too make good progress. Pupils in the resource unit make even better progress as a result of the outstanding support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Consequently, they work and play together amicably and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. Pupils

feel valued and know that adults have their best interests at heart. They are keen to learn and behave well. They usually concentrate on their work but their attention wanes when teachers talk for too long and they have no active involvement. The attendance rate is average because some families take holidays during term time.

Older pupils are proud to wear the smart blazers that show they are in Years 5 and 6 and they provide good role models for younger pupils. Pupils respond well when given responsibility. However, their skills in taking responsibility for their learning, using their initiative and making decisions are underdeveloped in many lessons. Pupils are safety conscious and are concerned for the welfare of others. They enjoy a good range of physical activities and understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils have a strong social and community awareness and are keen fundraisers for charities. Their positive relationships with others and their good academic progress help them to be well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' planning is usually good, although it is not always based fully on the data from assessment, which means the challenge for the most capable pupils is inconsistent, especially in Key Stage 1. Pupils are confident about tackling their work because teachers give clear explanations and have high expectations. Questions are used well to probe pupils' understanding and help the development of ideas. Nevertheless, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' views in discussion. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most teaching is lively and captures pupils' interest. Time is used well in most lessons, although occasionally teachers talk for too long and this restricts opportunities for pupils to get on with their tasks. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well. Teaching assistants have good expertise, work in close partnership with teachers and provide pupils with valuable help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Prominent and effective emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the development of their skills in information and communication technology. This helps to accelerate progress. Large, colourful sculptures, which were produced by pupils working with an artist in residence, demonstrate the vibrancy in pupils' art work. The school provides especially well for music, with many pupils developing as skilled singers and instrumentalists. Consequently, it is not surprising that the school had achieved the Artsmark Gold award. The school's awards for Healthy Schools and Activemark reflect good personal development. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those working in the resource unit benefit from outstanding support. Pupils really enjoy the wide range of educational visits, visitors and clubs, which benefit their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and know that the staff will listen if they have any problems, and say that 'teachers are really friendly and do all they can to help you'. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. Child protection procedures are robust and

regular health and safety checks are carried out. The school works well with external agencies to provide support for pupils. It is tenacious in promoting good attendance. Consequently, the attendance rate is rising, despite too many holidays being taken in term-time.

Pupils' academic support and guidance are generally good, and enable pupils to achieve well. Pupils' progress over time is tracked meticulously and this information is used effectively to set targets to raise pupils' achievement. However, pupils' knowledge of these targets is not always fully secure, and many are insufficiently involved in evaluating their own progress and future learning needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's rapid improvement has been as a result of the good leadership and high expectations of the headteacher. Her relentless drive for improvement has made a significant difference to the rate of pupils' progress. She has developed and motivated her leadership team. They, too, are committed and share her passion for improvement. They work effectively with staff to raise the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and recognise the need to eradicate any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation are used very effectively to target support and ensure that both leaders and staff are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors play an active part in the life and work of the school and as a result, have a good understanding of the priorities for development. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily because pupils have appropriate knowledge and understanding of communities locally, elsewhere in Britain and overseas.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

16 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northwood Park Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV10 8DS

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us to your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your classrooms. You have given us lots of helpful information. We think your school is a good school and these are the things you do well.

- Children make a good start in Reception.
- You work hard and make good progress because teaching is good.
- You enjoy coming to school and behave well.
- You have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- You enjoy your responsibilities, and know that you contribute well to school life.
- The teachers really care for you and help you if you are worried or upset.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.

The school is working hard to make things even better for you. We have asked the school to do two things.

- Make sure that lessons are interesting, give you more time to do things and provide you with harder work, especially for those who find work easy.
- Make sure that you have more opportunities to think things out for yourselves and that you understand your targets clearly and what you have to do to reach those targets.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and to try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Thank you again. We wish you continuing success.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector