

Penns Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103356
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376882
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Martin
Headteacher	Maureen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Shears

Additional inspector

Andrew Ridout

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by nine different teachers, and held meetings with representative members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at policies, planning documents, assessment data and pupils' work. They analysed the questionnaires returned by 127 parents and carers, 17 members of staff and 115 pupils.

Information about the school

Penns Primary is a smaller-than-average primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British origin. A small minority are from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Asian heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average, as are the proportion who speak English as an additional language and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has before- and after-school care managed by an external provider. This provision is subject to a separate inspection. The school has achieved the Quality Mark Basic Skills Award and Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current government floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Children begin school with skills that broadly meet national expectations. They make good progress and leave with attainment that is significantly above national expectations in English and mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make consistently good progress in English in Years 1 to 6. In mathematics, while they make good progress in Years 1 and 2, some pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Teaching is good. Pupils have excellent relationships with teachers and enjoy their learning. Lessons are interesting and engaging. The curriculum is creative and provides particularly good chances for pupils to practise their literacy skills, but fewer planned opportunities to practise numeracy in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively in some lessons and teachers do not consistently use focused questions to challenge pupils' thinking further.
- The quality of pupils' behaviour and safety is outstanding because of the strong nurturing ethos that is promoted by school leaders and all staff and is clearly demonstrated throughout the school.
- Leaders and managers lead the school well and are outstanding in their engagement with parents and carers. They monitor teaching effectively and ensure improvements are made, with notable success in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Middle managers are keen to work together to extend the monitoring of lessons. However, interventions to support pupils at risk of underachievement are not yet rigorously monitored and evaluated. Pupils who are on track to meet expected targets are not always challenged enough to make accelerated progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, particularly so that pupils make good or better progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, by ensuring that:
 - teaching assistants are used more creatively in whole-class teaching
 - planning for pupils of average ability consistently meets their needs
 - marking consistently helps pupils to know how to improve and enables them to respond
 - focused questioning provides further challenge
 - opportunities for practising numeracy skills in other subjects are carefully planned.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that:
 - interventions to support pupils at risk of underachievement are rigorously monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness
 - all pupils who are on track to meet expected progress are challenged to make accelerated progress
 - middle managers have more opportunities to carry out shared lesson monitoring.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with attainment that is above average. They make particularly good progress in linking sounds and letters, and in reading. Teachers continue to build on this effective start in Years 1 and 2 so that they enter Year 3 with attainment that is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 pupils build successfully on their prior learning in English and the vast majority make good progress in lessons. However, their learning in mathematics is not as strong because the teaching is more variable. Consequently, while some pupils make good progress, too many make satisfactory progress with a few pupils still underachieving. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs mirrors that of their peers. This is because pupils receive a good range of support to enable them to make good progress in English, but this is currently more limited in mathematics. Similarly, there is no disparity in progress between other groups, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is significantly above average in English, including in reading, and in mathematics overall, although it is more variable in mathematics.

While progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall, there are early signs of improvement because the school has rightly prioritised this as an area for development. A specialist teacher for mathematics has been appointed and a clear

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action plan developed. Pupils have benefited from a new scheme that has already had a positive impact on their enthusiasm for learning. The headteacher and the governing body are involved in supporting both groups of pupils and individuals to encourage and challenge them to make good progress. As a result progress this year is beginning to rise, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, there are currently a minority of pupils, mainly of average ability, who are still not making accelerated progress. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were making good progress. Inspectors found that this was generally true.

Quality of teaching

Lessons are characterised by highly positive relationships between staff and pupils. This results in pupils who have excellent social skills. Teachers plan interesting activities to engage pupils and the interactive whiteboards are used well to enhance teaching. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities that reinforce learning. For example, in one outstanding lesson about ratio, pupils experimented with various combinations of baking soda and vinegar to find out which ratio created the best volcano. Pupils know what they are going to learn and how they will know when they have been successful. At the end of lessons there are often opportunities for pupils to assess for themselves how well they are learning.

Teachers generally use assessment information well to plan lessons. There is a good focus on more-able pupils, who are challenged to reach the higher levels. For example, in one lesson where pupils learning about the difference between fact and opinion, more-able pupils were further challenged to think about bias within reports and the teacher used material from their topic work as a resource to explore this. Similarly, less-able pupils are supported well by teaching assistants. However, the planning for pupils of average ability is not always sufficiently clear, particularly for pupils in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, and this limits the progress they make, because the work is not always closely matched to their ability. While teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning in groups they are not used well enough at other points in lessons. Consequently, opportunities are missed to give focused teaching for individuals or small groups to close any gaps in their learning and further challenge them. The use of focused questioning by staff is variable. Where it is good, expectations are high and pupils are challenged in their thinking skills. Marking in English is detailed and helps pupils to know the next steps in their learning. However, this is more variable in mathematics.

The wide variety of theme days, such as art days and Indian themed days, enable pupils to explore their spiritual and cultural development. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other subjects, enhancing their development further. However, planned opportunities for practising numeracy skills in other subjects are at an earlier stage of development. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children are taught well. All pupils agreed that teaching is good. Inspectors are in agreement that the majority of pupils are taught well.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils is outstanding because they all feel safe and secure within a school environment where they are treated as individuals. The positive ethos of the school enables pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem and they develop highly positive relationships both with staff and each other. In lessons pupils work very well together, supporting each other in their learning. They have excellent attitudes towards their work and want to do the best that they can. Pupils in Year 6 take on a good range of responsibilities, including supporting younger pupils during the lunch break by setting up and playing games with them. The overwhelming majority of pupils are able to manage their own behaviour well and have excellent social skills. The very few pupils who have difficulties in managing their own behaviour are given excellent support that enables them to improve quickly. Lunchtimes are a positive experience because lunchtime supervisors are proactive in making them fun and meaningful. Pupils say that bullying in any form is extremely rare and they know that adult support is there for them if they need it. All pupils said that they feel safe in school. Every parent and carer who responded to the questionnaire agreed, and the overwhelming majority felt that the standard of behaviour is good and that the school dealt well with any difficulties.

The attendance of pupils is above the national average and this has been sustained over the last three years. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is below the national average. The school has embedded strategies to support the very few pupils who are absent too often or are late to school. The excellent liaison and help offered to the parents and carers of these pupils has been demonstrated through rapid improvement in attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, along with the senior management team, has a clear vision for the school that is shared with all staff and pupils, creating a positive ethos that has a good overall impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and particularly on their social and moral development. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and areas for improvement are contained within a plan that clearly articulates how these areas are to be tackled. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate and is based on good-quality data that are used well by staff to support teaching. The monitoring of teaching is of a good standard and the results are used effectively to make improvements. Regular meetings with teachers identify pupils who may be at risk of underachievement. However, the resulting interventions are not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough, resulting in some of these pupils not making better progress. While the school works to ensure that all pupils make expected progress, not enough is done to ensure that they make accelerated progress, particularly in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. The governing body is very supportive of the school and provides a good level of challenge. Its effective initiatives include the promotion of independent learning.

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Overall, pupils make good progress in the wider curriculum and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. While English is a strength of the curriculum, mathematics is weaker at Key Stage 2. Middle managers, who are very keen to develop their roles, are creatively linking subjects together and enriching the experience for pupils. While they monitor the curriculum currently through looking at pupils' work, this does not yet extend to observing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Leaders take care to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities in their learning and that any discrimination is tackled. The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The school clearly has the capacity to improve. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. The standard of behaviour is now outstanding. Staff are committed to school improvement and are keen to continue looking for ways to make learning even better for pupils. This excellent care and attention extends to parents and carers, who speak highly of the school. For example, through workshops for each class, the majority of parents and carers work with their children on literacy and numeracy skills. This is a positive experience for both adults and children and helps parents and carers to know how to help their children with their homework.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penns Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B72 1BS

Thank you for the welcome that we received when we visited your school recently. It was lovely to meet you all and find out about your good school.

You told us, both in person and through your questionnaires, how much you enjoy school because the teachers make learning fun. We are pleased to see that you attend very regularly to make the most of your learning. You also told us, along with your parents and carers, that you feel safe and secure in school. It is good to know that the adults in school look after you so well.

We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour around the school, both in lessons and in the playground. We enjoyed watching you learning and playing together so well. We know that your school is very proud of you all.

We have asked your teachers to make your learning even better, particularly in mathematics for pupils in Years 3 to 6, by making sure that all of you have work that is just right for you, and asking you challenging questions. You could help by politely telling your teacher if the work is too easy or too hard. We would also like the teaching assistants to be used even more effectively, and have asked the teachers when marking your work to tell you how to make it even better and give you time to have a go. We would like you to practise your numeracy skills more often in other subjects.

We have asked the school leaders to keep checking to make sure that you all make at least good progress. We have also asked the teachers who lead different subjects to work together to check that the exciting curriculum helps you to learn even more in lessons.

Thank you again for looking after us so well. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Shears
Lead inspector

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