

Northfield Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103775
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	355456
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Roy Bowers 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 of pupils on the school roll	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Bird
Headteacher	Paul Moore
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Nineteen lessons were observed and nineteen teachers seen. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of Governors, the special educational needs coordinator, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the senior leaders, the middle leaders, a group of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at its plans for improvement, assessment information, lesson plans, monitoring information, policies and 80 questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What proportion of pupils are reaching the levels expected for their age group and what is the progress made by the more-able pupils?
- Has the work undertaken to reduce the proportion of persistent absentees been effective?
- How effectively is assessment used to challenge the more-able pupils?
- To what extent are the systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving the school embedded at all levels of leadership?

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds but the large majority are of White British heritage. There is an above-average proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well-above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than that in most schools. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. A few have emotional and behavioural or speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is approximately twice the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises two Reception classes for four-year-old children. There are before-school and after-school care clubs, which are managed by the governing body and formed part of this inspection. The school has achieved a number of awards including national Healthy Schools status and the Activemark. Following the inspection in October 2009, the school was given a notice to improve. In May 2010, a monitoring inspection found that the school had made good progress towards the issues that had to be addressed.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection. Its overall effectiveness is now good. New initiatives, a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems have been at the heart of the drive to raise pupils' achievement from inadequate to good. The school currently provides a good standard of education.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average in most year groups and pupils make good progress. Strong links with external agencies and a caring ethos help ensure that all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, are cared for well and feel safe. Although work by the school to improve attendance has had a positive impact and attendance has improved, a few pupils do not come to school regularly enough and attendance remains low because a small minority of pupils are persistently absent.

Teaching is consistently good and, occasionally, outstanding because teachers use the assessment information well to match work closely to the needs of most pupils. However, it is occasionally less well matched to the capabilities of the more-able pupils and, consequently, in a few lessons, the work given to these pupils does not provide sufficient challenge.

The curriculum provides effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The nurture group gives many good opportunities for the most vulnerable pupils to work and play in a calm, supportive atmosphere. French and music provision of good quality enrich the curriculum.

Senior and middle leaders have worked together exceptionally well to bring about the rapid improvements since the last inspection. They share a clear vision based upon raising pupils' achievement within a caring and supportive environment. An improved tracking system is helping all leaders check carefully on pupils' progress. Pupils who are falling behind with their work are identified earlier and support provided. Regular meetings between leaders and teachers have heightened teachers' accountability for pupils' progress. The middle leaders' monitoring and evaluation skills are used very effectively for many aspects of school improvement. However, they have little experience of checking on the quality of pupils' learning in lessons and providing teachers with effective feedback. Consequently, their skills in these areas are less well developed. Although engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory, the school's plans to improve the communication between it and all groups of parents and carers are not fully implemented. The substantial improvements made over the past year, accurate self-evaluation and the depth of skills within the leadership team show that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance and reduce the rate of persistent absence by providing additional support for the parents and carers of those pupils who are persistently absent.
- Ensure that the work given to the more-able pupils is always well matched to their capabilities and provides sufficient challenge.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers by fully implementing the plan for improvement.
- Develop middle leaders' skills of monitoring pupils' learning in lessons and providing teachers with effective feedback.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From their low starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children from all social and ethnic backgrounds make good progress which continues through Key Stages 1 and 2. A major focus on improving pupils' literacy skills over the past year has had a very positive impact on their achievement, especially in writing. A systematic approach to teaching letters and sounds and providing pupils with more writing opportunities have helped ensure that most pupils in all year groups are attaining the levels expected for their age. Despite the improvements, pupils' attainment in writing is still below that in reading and mathematics. The many initiatives to improve pupils' achievement in all subjects have been mainly focused on pupils with skills which are below those expected for pupils of that age. In the lessons observed, the more-able pupils were, occasionally, not challenged as well as others. Consequently, in these lessons, the progress made by some of the more-able pupils is slower than that of others. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who are learning English as an additional language is helping them achieve well.

In lessons and around school, almost all pupils behave well and show very positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils from all the different backgrounds cooperate with each other well and are polite and courteous. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about seeing the sea for the first time and show excitement when looking at the recently hatched chicks. When the very occasional act of bullying or aggression occurs, pupils say that it is dealt with very effectively by staff. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider communities, such as acting as playground buddies, supporting a range of charities and working with the Dudley Safeguarding Board.

Since the last inspection, the school has increased its work to improve attendance. Attendance monitoring strategies are more rigorous. The parent-support adviser visits homes and rewards are given to pupils for attending regularly. However, although attendance has improved, it is still low because of the persistent absenteeism of a very small minority of pupils.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Strong relationships between teachers and pupils and very effective class management help provide a calm and positive climate for learning in lessons. Teachers' planning is detailed and shows activities for pupils at different levels of attainment. Occasionally, there is not enough difference between the activities given to the lower attaining pupils and those who have attained a much higher level. Many examples of good marking were seen during the inspection giving clear guidelines to pupils on how to improve their work, especially in writing.

Pupils enjoy the theme days and the wide range of visits and trips that support school work, but they would like more after-school activities to be provided. Music provision, particularly instrumental tuition, is a strong feature of the school's work. A wide range of partnerships, such as a literacy and drama project with the Royal Shakespeare Company, help enrich many aspects of the curriculum.

The before-school and after-school care clubs are helpful for parents and provide happy and secure environments where pupils take part in a variety of stimulating activities. Comprehensive induction arrangements when pupils first enter the Early Years Foundation Stage and strong links with local high schools help pupils quickly settle into their new communities.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He is ably supported by the senior leaders who communicate high expectations to staff through rigorous checking on pupils' progress and setting challenging targets for improvement. Staff share a common sense of direction and vision for the future. Middle leaders work very effectively with senior leaders to write plans for improvement which are focused well on pupils' outcomes. Although middle leaders have strong skills in monitoring pupils' progress through data and work in pupils' books, their skills of checking on pupils' learning in lessons and giving effective feedback are not as fully developed. The governing body provides satisfactory support and challenge to the senior leaders and is more aware than at the time of the last inspection of its role in holding the school to account.

The school's links with the local communities are well developed and pupils show a very high degree of tolerance and understanding for others in school and in the local community. However, the plan for promoting community cohesion is not yet fully implemented and pupils do not have enough knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of communities in the United Kingdom and globally. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is shown in the detailed knowledge that staff have of all the pupils and the high quality care and guidance it provides for those most vulnerable. The school canvasses parents' and carers' views, and values their responses. However, it is not doing enough to communicate with all groups of parents and carers and, consequently, a small minority feel that the school does not listen to their concerns and suggestions. The school is aware of this and has plans to implement a variety of strategies to improve the communication, including developing the web-site and widening the activities of the parents' and carers' association. Staff are vigilant and consistently implement good safeguarding procedures that ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Strong induction procedures and a caring ethos help children settle quickly into the daily routines. Provision has improved greatly over the past year and children now make good progress. However, because the starting points of the majority are particularly low, by the time pupils enter Year 1, attainment is still below average. Regular checking of children's learning helps ensure that those who are not making the expected progress are identified early so that they can be provided with additional support. Accurate assessments enable teachers to plan activities that effectively meet the needs of all children. Children's welfare is managed and nurtured well. Children with emotional or social difficulties and those who are learning English as an additional language are provided for well, often with individual support. The caring relationships between the adults and children are evident and give all learners confidence to join in with all activities. Children enjoy coming to school, behave well and feel safe and secure.

Children experience an extensive range of well-planned activities across all six areas of learning. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities, including many opportunities to learn outside. Opportunities are sometimes missed to improve children's achievement because not all the adults are fully engaged in helping children learn through skilful questioning and prompts. Leadership and management are good. Children's progress is tracked well and those who are experiencing difficulties are identified early and support is given.

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

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

Fewer responses were received to the questionnaire than from most similar schools. Several parents and carers helpfully gave their time to speak to inspectors. Most who responded to the inspection questionnaire or who spoke with the inspectors were happy with their child's experiences at school. A small minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed concern about how effectively the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The headteacher acknowledges that there are a few pupils who have special behavioural difficulties and who must be managed carefully and sensitively. The inspectors found that teachers did this well and pupils' behaviour, overall, was good. Another small minority of parents and carers said that the school does not take into account their concerns or suggestions. The inspection found that the school values any suggestions made by parents and carers and is currently seeking new, improved ways for them to make their views known. Comments received from all parents and carers were fully taken into consideration before inspectors reached judgments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northfield Road 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 367 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	41	41	51	3	4	3	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	26	52	65	3	4	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	18	52	65	9	11	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	25	44	55	12	15	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	18	23	51	64	6	8	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	21	52	65	7	9	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	25	48	60	8	10	2	3
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)	17	21	49	61	8	10	3	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	20	51	64	7	9	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	16	46	58	13	16	8	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	13	44	55	13	16	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	16	51	64	8	10	6	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	33	42	53	8	10	3	4

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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northfield Road Primary School, Dudley, DY2 9ER

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school such an enjoyable experience. We appreciated meeting you, visiting your lessons and hearing what you thought about the school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and you felt that most pupils behave well. That is exactly what we found during the inspection. We were impressed with the way the school cares for you, especially those who have problems or difficulties. Although almost all of you come to school regularly, there is a small number who do not. The headteacher says that he going to make sure that the few who are often absent attend school as often as they can so that they do not miss out on all the exciting things that go on.

Most of you may remember that about a year ago inspectors came to the school and found that there were some serious aspects which needed improving. We are pleased to say that the school is now much better and we have judged it to be good. This means that you are now making good progress and learning much more in lessons. We want the school to be even better and have asked the headteacher to ensure that those of you who are already reaching high standards have even harder work in lessons. Some of your parents and carers said that they wanted the school to take more notice of any suggestions they had to make the school even better. The headteacher says that he intends to improve communication and values the opinions of all parents and carers. All the teachers work hard for you and some take on additional responsibilities in the school. We have asked the headteacher to ensure that these teachers become even better at making sure that you are all learning well in your lessons.

You can help the school improve even further by continuing to work hard and making sure that every one of you comes to school as often as you can.

We shall take away many pleasant memories about your school. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers

Her Majesty's Inspector

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