

Exhall Cedars Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130898
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	364020
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Walker

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fran Wilkins
Headteacher	Sharon Hillyard
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2008
School address	Trenance Road Coventry CV7 9FJ
Telephone number	024 76316034
Fax number	024 76316034
Email address	admin2635@we-learn.com

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed seven teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the learning improvement plan, the tracking system to monitor the pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, and a sample of pupils' work. They also analysed questionnaires completed by staff and 49 parents and carers.

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

- The inspection team explored the progress being made by all groups of pupils, particularly those with English as a second language.
- It observed the effectiveness of teaching in engaging pupils so that they make at least good progress in lessons.
- It assessed the effectiveness of the strategies used by the school to improve the overall attendance of pupils.
- It investigated the effectiveness of the revised leadership and management structure in supporting improvements in the school.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to the average infant school. It is situated in the Exhall area of Bedworth which is a former coalmining town south of Nuneaton. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Over 40% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with a significant number of Asian British from Indian heritage. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average and the most common first language spoken is Punjabi. The proportion of pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is organised through two part-time Nursery groups and two Reception classes. The privately run Skye Wishes Playgroup, the breakfast club and after school club are located on the site but did not form part of this inspection. The school has received National Healthy Schools Status.

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

This is a good school. The headteacher provides effective leadership so that there is a clear vision for continuous improvement in the school. The school is fully inclusive in integrating pupils from different ethnic and social backgrounds, including those who do not have English as their first language. The school's very caring approach is evident in the positive relationships with parents and carers who greatly appreciate the support for their children. One parent wrote: 'We are very happy with the school. There is always a positive focused atmosphere when we go into the school and all the teachers are very approachable.'

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from their below average starting

- points and the vast majority reach broadly average attainment by the time they leave the school. Good teaching, the additional support for underachieving pupils and the emphasis on key skills all contribute to the good progress of the pupils. The school has been particularly successful in supporting pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

The school is ambitious to raise attainment further to above the national average, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. The skills and confidence of a minority of pupils in sentence construction and spelling are not sufficiently developed, so they have yet to embrace and enjoy the process of writing. The new systems for tracking pupils' progress and the additional help for underachieving pupils are broadly effective. However, a small number of pupils are not fully benefiting from this extra support, while some higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged to gain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

The good quality of care, guidance and support promotes pupils' good personal development. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good and this contributes to a positive atmosphere for learning. They are respectful towards each other so that every pupil feels valued in the school's family atmosphere. Pupils feel very safe in the school and have an excellent understanding of issues relating to safety. Pupils have been particularly active in welcoming and supporting newcomers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Teaching is good as pupils are actively involved in lessons and make good progress, enjoying the experience of school and learning well. The curriculum is good and uses pupils' experiences to bring learning to life and support their interest and understanding.

The newly formed leadership team is effective in promoting school improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic so that the headteacher is well aware of the strengths and areas for development. Strategic planning in the school is good and there are clear actions for improvement. However, the governors are not working in a close enough partnership with the headteacher and are not fully effective in their evaluating and

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monitoring roles. They are not holding the school to account and do not have sufficient training to fully undertake their roles and responsibilities. Even so, the effective leadership of the headteacher and leadership team, the improving record of pupils' progress and the clear strategies for improvement indicate that this school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment of pupils across the school by:
 - building on the new systems for tracking pupils' progress and providing additional support for identified underachieving pupils
 - developing strategies to improve pupils' confidence, enjoyment and skills in writing
 - providing more challenge to pupils to gain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Develop the role of governors so that they can become more effective in their evaluating and monitoring roles by:
 - encouraging governors to work in closer partnership with the headteacher and leadership team
 - ensuring targeted training for governors is provided on a regular basis so that they are fully able to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The majority of pupils are making good progress, achieving well and enjoying their learning. For example, Year 2 pupils were fully engaged in their work in mathematics and made good progress when the teacher organised imaginative group tasks to examine patterns in numbers and develop pupils' understanding of problem solving. The school has been particularly successful in improving the standards in reading and writing of boys in Years 1 and 2, which had been identified as an area of weakness. The school rightly acknowledges that all pupils require additional support and encouragement in classes to develop their writing skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in and out of classes by teaching assistants so that they make good progress, in line with others. Pupils who use English as an additional language also make good progress, increasingly so as they gain confidence in their language skills. They are well supported by a specialist Punjabi speaking teaching assistant who provides additional classes in speaking and writing, which greatly accelerates their language development and general progress in school.

Pupils really enjoy school and develop positive personal characteristics. Most have a good understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles, as acknowledged by the Healthy Schools status. Pupils raise money for a range of charities and make a good contribution to the local community by organising events such as visits to the local residential home. The school council is active in supporting improvements in the school and recently liaised with the local council to clean up the alleyway adjacent to the school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Although overall attendance is now average, the poor attendance of a very few pupils, particularly those taken on extended

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holidays during term time, is adversely affecting their progress and experience of school. Pupils' basic skills and ability to work with others are developing well. As a result, they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	1
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

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?

Classrooms are attractive learning areas with good examples of pupils' work on display. Teachers' planning normally ensures that tasks are appropriate for the range of attainment represented in the class. Teaching assistants work very effectively with teachers to support pupils who require additional support with their work. In the best lessons, teachers plan a range of interesting activities which motivate and engage the pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils display enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration. A number of teachers are particularly good at accelerating learning through skilful questioning and encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Most teachers provide pupils with good feedback on their work although some pupils are uncertain of what they need to do to improve. In a small number of lessons, pupils lose concentration when teachers' expectations of work are too low or the tasks are insufficiently challenging.

The school places a high emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy, which supports pupils' good progress. The school is developing a more skills-based approach to the curriculum which makes clear links between the different subjects and brings learning

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to life. A detailed programme of personal, health and social education greatly supports pupils' good personal development. All pupils benefit from a comprehensive and regular programme of physical education. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills across the different subject areas because many of the computers in the school are in need of repair or replacement. There are numerous visitors to the school including representatives from the local community who provide additional experiences for the pupils. A number of visits, including those to Coombe Park, Coventry transport museum and the Sikh Gurdwara in Bedworth, provide good enrichment for the curriculum.

Arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support are strengths of the school. Pupils are well known as individuals and they told inspectors that there are always members of staff to talk to if they have a problem. There are effective systems of individual support for all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good working relationships between the school and external agencies benefit pupils, ensuring their social and learning needs are met through effective programmes. The school is diligent in monitoring absences and encouraging better attendance, although a significant number of parents and carers continue to take their children on extended holidays during term time. In other respects, the school is very effective in working with parents and carers so that they can fully support the development of their children. Good arrangements are in place to support a smooth transition to the local junior school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides clear leadership and is well supported by a restructured leadership team which is driving improvements in the school. Subject leaders are developing their supporting and monitoring roles in order to ensure higher standards in their curriculum areas. Rigorous systems of monitoring teaching and tracking pupils' progress are beginning to raise attainment so that there are fewer pupils who underachieve in their work.

Robust procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and underpin the school's very caring approach. Consequently, pupils feel very safe in school and almost all parents and carers say that their children are safe there. The governing body regularly checks that all practices and procedures fully meet health and safety requirements. There is regular communication with parents and carers regarding events in the school and the progress of their children. The school is active in encouraging parents and carers to be

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fully involved in the education of their children. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities for all, which ensures that the school is fully inclusive in integrating pupils from different ethnic and social backgrounds. The deputy headteacher analyses in detail the performance of different groups in the school and ensures that any gaps in attainment are narrowed through intervention and support.

The school has good partnerships with the pre-school settings including the Skye Wishes Playgroup, the local junior school, external agencies and the local network of schools. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion and works very closely with the families from minority ethnic communities to welcome them into the school. Parents are invited to assemblies and lessons to celebrate the different faiths and religious festivals within the local community. The school is presently hosting evening classes in Punjabi which are being run by members of the local Indian community.

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	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	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start to their education because of the well-planned provision, high quality of care and the consistently good teaching. Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes provide a secure and welcoming environment where children learn quickly and happily. They make good progress, particularly in their personal development but also in their speaking and listening skills. A good range of structured activities is having a significant impact on their personal development as well as encouraging number and language skills. The children develop their social skills, behave well and help each other. They are developing independence and confidence as well as learning to share and cooperate with each other.

Teachers keep detailed records of children's skills and use this information to match the activities well to the full range of learning needs. Children also keep a record of their

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experiences through their 'Learning Journal' which they share proudly with parents and carers. The calm and purposeful atmosphere is created by good organisation and leadership. The teachers and teaching assistants work well together so that there are clear expectations of the children. There is a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. The spacious indoor accommodation is well resourced and is used effectively to support the learning of the children. However, the outside area is not used as well as might be expected. Good procedures ensure a smooth transition to Year 1. There is regular liaison with parents and carers, who speak very highly of the care and support the school provides for their children.

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

A smaller-than-average percentage of parents and carers returned questionnaires than in most infant schools. Most of these are very positive about the work of the school and its impact on their children's learning. Responses to the questionnaire included a number of detailed comments emphasising the caring approach of staff towards their children. A very small minority of respondents suggested the school does not inform them about their children's progress. Inspectors found that these comments referred to a period before the inspection when a number of supply teachers had been covering a long term sick leave. The headteacher informed us that a parents evening has now been arranged for this class. Overall, the vast majority of parents' and carers' views reflect inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Exhall Cedars Infant 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	69	15	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	61	19	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	39	24	49	2	4	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	45	23	47	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	51	22	45	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	39	27	55	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	51	23	47	1	2	1	2
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	35	28	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	45	24	49	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	29	31	63	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	41	23	47	2	4	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	22	45	25	51	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	59	18	37	1	2	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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



19 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Exhall Cedars Infant School, Coventry, CV7 9FJ

Thank you for making us so welcome and for sharing your views during the inspection. We really enjoyed watching your lessons and looking at your work. It was also good to see you during playtime and lunch. We were very impressed by the standard of your singing in the assembly and particularly enjoyed 'Lift your banners high'. Your school is a good one and your parents and carers are very pleased with the good start you make in your education. There are many positive things about your school.

You enjoy school and make good progress in your lessons.

You are friendly, confident and well behaved.

You show kindness and consideration to others.

You have an excellent understanding of issues related to safety.

You take responsibility in school and you contribute to the local community.

Your teachers plan interesting lessons for you.

The teachers and the support staff care greatly for you as individuals.

You have a good headteacher.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to do the following things to make the school even better.

Challenge more of you to achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Help you to improve your confidence, enjoyment and skills in writing.

Ensure that the governing body is fully involved in school improvements.

You can help by behaving well and working hard. Keep enjoying the many things you do at Exhall Cedars Infant School.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker

Lead inspector

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