

Water Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103326
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376877
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Pratt
Headteacher	Debbie Miles
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons and eight teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body and groups of pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at progress data, assessment information, improvement plans, monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Inspectors received and analysed 70 questionnaires from parents and carers, 92 from pupils and 19 from staff.

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

- How well does teaching help middle attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities across the school to make progress?
- What impact does attendance and transience have on pupils' learning and progress?
- Have leaders and managers taken effective steps to counter the dip in Key Stage 2 achievement and so demonstrated capacity to improve?
- What is the quality of provision in the Reception class and resulting outcomes in children's learning and development?

Information about the school

Water Mill Primary is smaller than most schools of its type. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is high, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. A very high number of pupils leave and join the school at different times throughout each school year. Children start in the Reception class in the September after they become four. A breakfast club and an after-school club are managed by the governing body. The headteacher has been in post for one term.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Water Mill Primary is a satisfactory school. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Children start in Reception with knowledge and skills within the expected band for their age. The school has successfully tackled the dip in performance in 2010 and attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Good care, guidance and support enable pupils who join the school at intermittent times during the year to settle quickly and so they too make at least satisfactory and often good progress. Pupils make a good contribution to the school's positive atmosphere: those from the many different backgrounds and countries get along noticeably well together. Pupils have great respect for their own and others' cultures. They say that the school 'is like a little community of friendship where we get to meet people from all around the world.' Behaviour is good and bullying is rare. The positive atmosphere promotes an environment where pupils feel safe. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced significantly and attendance is now average.

Teaching is satisfactory. Relationships are positive and so rapport between teachers and pupils is good. As a result, pupils are confident to ask for help if they find the task too difficult or if they have a personal concern. Assessment information is used to plan learning but this does not always build on pupils' prior attainment to build skills systematically. Subsequent tasks are sometimes too difficult for pupils to complete independently. While pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language receive the support they need to make satisfactory progress, some middle attaining pupils struggle to complete the tasks. Feedback on learning is not always focused enough. As a result, pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and their next learning steps.

The new headteacher, supported fully by the deputy headteacher, staff and the governing body, has quickly made an accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness and identified relevant priorities for improvement. This ensures that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. A new system for tracking pupils' progress is helping staff to identify in a timely manner pupils who need focused support because they are not making expected progress. Nevertheless, the monitoring of teaching lacks rigour at times as it is not always guided sufficiently well by assessment information. The governing body is becoming more challenging in asking the school questions about its performance since receiving the headteacher's updated evaluation. It monitors safeguarding arrangements rigorously to ensure

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consistency in practice and to secure pupils' good safety and welfare.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to 80% by July 2013 by ensuring that teachers:
 - identify tasks that build learning systematically
 - make consistent use of assessment to adjust tasks when pupils find they are too difficult or too easy in lessons
 - give pupils detailed feedback about their learning so they are clear about how well they are doing and what to do next to improve.

- Use assessment data relating to pupils' achievement as a focus for monitoring activities and so build more rigour into the evaluation of teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The school's data shows attainment at the end of Year 6 was average in English and mathematics last year. Pupils' current attainment is average reflecting the successful actions to reverse a dip in attainment in 2010. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their average starting points at the end of Reception. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress to achieve the targets in their individual learning plans. The high number of pupils who join the school during Key Stage 2, including those who speak English as an additional language, make at least satisfactory and often good progress. Pupils quickly gain confidence due to the positive atmosphere in lessons.

Learning and progress in lessons are satisfactory, although the needs of different ability groups are not always met. The progress of middle attaining pupils slows when planned tasks are too difficult for them to complete without considerable support from the teacher or teaching assistant. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils had difficulty understanding how to round numbers with four decimal points to the nearest decimal point because their understanding of the method was insecure. Pupils know their targets but cannot always say why a piece of work is an improvement on a previous one because they are not always clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. Pupils enjoy learning when lessons are active. Pupils in Year 1 enjoyed using their senses to explore an imaginary world, drawing and labelling what they pretended to see hear, touch and smell. 'Look I found a dinosaur bone,' one boy exclaimed sharing his picture to show how big it was.

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Pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well together during playtimes and when cooperating on group tasks in lessons. Pupils who join the school during each year are welcomed warmly and so quickly form strong friendships. Pupils have good opportunities to express their views in lessons and assemblies and have been fully involved recently in choosing new playground equipment. The school council is re-forming this term to give pupils formal opportunities to put forward their views and ideas. Pupils regularly raise funds for local and world charities and work closely with community groups. Pupils’ good understanding of the importance of keeping healthy is reflected in active playtimes, enthusiastic participation in sporting clubs and making healthy choices at lunchtimes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships are positive because pupils have a great deal of respect for their own and others’ beliefs and cultures. High quality artwork celebrates pupils’ achievements in the subject. Pupils have positive attitudes and come to school eager to learn. Average literacy and numeracy skills and good computer skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for later life.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ask pupils questions that enable them to think through how to solve a problem or complete a task rather than giving them a direct answer. This develops pupils’ ability and confidence to work independently. When this is matched with tasks that are not too easy or too difficult, learning is good. Teachers do not always check quickly enough whether pupils can complete the planned tasks and so do not always make adjustments necessary adjustments to enable better than satisfactory

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

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progress. Teachers use information and communication technology well to support pupils’ independent research and to make learning relevant and interesting. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive focused support from teaching assistants in lessons and when they work in small groups outside the classroom to help them make satisfactory progress.

The promotion of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. The organisation of the curriculum into themes enables pupils to practise skills in a range of subjects. Visits bring learning alive and promote pupils’ personal development well. Pupils particularly enjoy the numerous additional activities such as learning about their own and others’ cultures through dance, art and music, taking part in sporting events and entering art competitions. Pupils in Year 4 enjoy the opportunity to learn to play a cornet or trombone and many choose to continue learning a musical instrument in Years 5 and 6.

Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive focused support and guidance to ensure they attend school every day and to prevent them from falling behind with their learning. Those with medical needs receive good care to enable them to attend school. Pupils who join the school at different times during the year receive good support and guidance to help them to settle quickly and prevent any slippage in their rate of progress. The breakfast club gives pupils a positive start to the day. The after-school care club provides a safe and homely place for pupils to relax and have fun with their friends at the end of the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

In the short time since her appointment, the headteacher has quickly gained an accurate view of the school’s performance. She has worked closely with the deputy headteacher and the whole staff team to implement an improvement plan that focuses on raising attainment as its main priority. An investigation into the fall in pupils’ attainment in 2010 has resulted in an accurate evaluation of the school’s performance. Teaching is observed regularly although assessment information is not always used to evaluate whether teachers consistently plan learning that meets the needs of all pupils. Parents and carers value the improved communication and particularly the regular newsletter which keeps them informed about the school’s events and activities.

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The governing body is beginning to ask senior leaders to show the evidence for their evaluation as it becomes more informed about the school’s performance. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. Detailed assessment information has been used to focus learning intervention groups. As a result, the learning needs of targeted pupils are met more effectively and pupils whose progress slows in certain aspects are helped to catch up quickly. Assessment information is used less well to target the evaluation of teaching to find reasons for any discrepancy in pupils’ expected and actual progress. Safeguarding arrangements ensure pupils’ safety and well-being. The school makes rigorous checks of the suitability of staff, volunteers and members of the governing body. Risk assessments ensure pupils are safe when on the premises and when taking part in visits.

Partnership with community groups and visitors enriches pupils’ learning well and helps them to gain a good understanding of the world around them. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils keep in touch by letter and email with classmates who leave so that they find out about their new school and where they live. Pupils work with members of the local community to grow vegetables, which are enjoyed at lunchtimes or when cooking different recipes from around the world. Discrimination is tackled proactively through assemblies, lessons and curriculum themes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

When they start school, children’s skills and knowledge are in line with those expected for their age although this can vary each year. Children make satisfactory progress and reach average levels by the end of the Reception year in nearly all

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areas of learning. Provision is satisfactory, with some instances of good learning, but teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory overall. The best learning takes place when children are engaged in activities that they choose themselves. As a result, they make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment at the end of the year is above average in these areas of learning. Children are confident to ask for help and support and interact well with adults. They cooperate well when sharing toys, resources and materials. For example, three boys took it in turns to talk about a computer game before agreeing decisions about what to choose and which answer was correct. A small group of children had great fun racing each other around the playground on tricycles. Care, guidance and support for children with medical needs, those who are learning to speak English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good. As a result, these children are enabled to be fully involved in all learning activities and to make good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Adults make careful note of what children can and cannot do and use the information to plan further learning activities and resources. Some comments are general such as ‘good number recognition’ and so do not always guide adult interventions sufficiently to challenge more able children in particular. When comments are specific, such as ‘able to count to and recognise 6’, adults know to extend learning beyond this number. Children have daily opportunity to learn outdoors although this is sometimes managed by adults rather than children having free choice. The school has identified relevant improvement priorities and has planned actions to raise children’s attainment in communication language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and number.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Around 37% of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. The overwhelming majority are happy with what the school provides. The inspection endorses their view that the school keeps pupils safe, helps them to have healthy lifestyles, and that behaviour is good. Nearly all parents and carers say that their children enjoy school. Not all parents and carers feel that their suggestions are listened to or that they are helped to support their children’s learning. The recently formed Friends’ Association is giving parents and carers formal opportunity to express their views. The school is beginning to organise workshops to help parents and carers to support their children’s learning more effectively at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Water Mill 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	67	21	30	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	40	57	28	40	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	22	31	38	54	5	7	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	34	40	57	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	39	40	57	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	15	21	42	60	12	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	37	42	60	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	30	38	54	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	24	34	42	60	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	39	37	53	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	20	44	63	7	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	41	34	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	41	59	28	40	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



5 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Water Mill Primary School, Birmingham B29 6TS

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. Thank you also to those of you who returned a questionnaire and took the time to tell us so much about your school. We were impressed with how well you all get along together and especially how you welcome new pupils to the school from all around the world and help them to make friends quickly. You are all very polite and behave well. Nearly all of you said you felt safe in school and know how to stay safe at other times.

Water Mill is a satisfactory school. You make satisfactory progress in lessons and so have satisfactory skills in English and mathematics to support your learning. This includes pupils who join and leave the school in older year groups. Most of you enjoy school and in particular art and all the extra activities you do. You make a good contribution to the school by acting as play leaders and reading buddies. You raise funds for numerous charities at home and abroad. You told us that you are looking forward to the reinstatement of the school council this year so that you can tell the school your ideas and what you would like to see improve. You have good knowledge, understanding and respect for your own and others' beliefs and cultures.

We have asked the school to make two improvements. We want to see more good teaching across the school so that you do tasks in lessons that are challenging enough to help you to make good progress. We have asked that all teachers give you precise feedback about your learning so that you are clear about how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve. We have asked your headteacher to look more closely at how much progress you are making when evaluating how good learning and teaching are in lessons.

You can help by telling your teachers if you are not clear or sure about anything, by asking them what you need to do next to improve and then doing it. Thank you again for your warm welcome.

Yours sincerely

Georgina Beasley
Lead inspector

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