

# Benson Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	103362
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham City Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	376884
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Thomas Hatchett

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	468
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Beardsmore
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cath Rindl
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Benson Road Birmingham B18 5TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 554 4913
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 523 3448
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@benson.bham.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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<b>Inspection number</b>	376884



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## Introduction

### Inspection team

David Thomas Hatchett	Additional Inspector
Keith Williams	Additional Inspector
Mary Hughes	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils and a group of governors. They observed the teaching of a range of subjects, including phonics (letters and sounds). In doing so, they observed 29 lessons and observed all class teachers. They evaluated work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, child protection and school self-evaluation. They also examined the school development plan, governing body minutes, notes of visits from external advisers, and data relating to pupils' performance. They analysed the results of 124 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

### Information about the school

Benson Community School is a larger-than-average primary school located on the edge of Birmingham city centre. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average. The majority are from Asian or Asian British Pakistani, and Black Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average. A higher proportion of pupils than average join the school at other than the usual starting points. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, as is the proportion of pupils supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, most of whom have moderate learning difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school holds the Leading Parent Partnership Award, National Healthy Schools status and is a member of Greet Teaching School Alliance.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Benson Community School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. It has many strengths, but is not yet an outstanding school because, at times, inconsistencies in teaching limit pupils' progress and achievement in English and mathematics.
- From low starting points, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. By the time they leave Year 6, their attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teaching is often characterised by high expectations, strong subject knowledge, the effective use of resources and lesson planning that takes full account of pupils' abilities and needs. Support for those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also good. However, on occasions lessons are over-directed by the teacher. This restricts pupils' independence and limits the progress that they make. Occasionally, lessons are not sufficiently challenging to bring out the best in the more-able pupils.
- Pupils' behave very well and show positive attitudes to learning. They are courteous, polite and cooperate well with each other. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the computer. Although most pupils are eager to learn, some are not as actively involved in learning as they could be, particularly when they do not have opportunities to make decisions and choices about their learning.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders, managers and governors are committed to improvement and have high expectations for the success of all pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders manage the quality of teaching well through regular monitoring of lessons, teachers' plans and pupils' books, and through the introduction of rigorous pupil progress meetings.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and outstanding in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment further, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring more able-pupils are always challenged to attain high standards
  - heightening pupils' motivation by providing them with more opportunities to make choices and decisions about their learning
  - ensuring all teachers check frequently, during the course of lessons, to make sure all pupils are fully engaged and understand all aspects of the tasks they are set.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well from their low starting points. This view is endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents and carers, who feel that their children are making good progress. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experiences that are significantly below age-related expectations, particularly in communication and calculation. They make good progress, however, by the beginning of Year 1 their attainment remains below national expectations, despite the good gains in learning that they have made. Pupils continue to make good progress through the school. They acquire early reading skills securely so that most pupils reach the level expected of them by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, by the end of Year 6, is broadly average. Pupils attain high standards in physical education and art and design because of excellent specialist teaching and a strong focus on the teaching of skills which promotes rapid progress.

Pupils' learning and performance in the classroom are good. For example, pupils made good progress in a challenging Year 6 mathematics lesson about solving word problems, because of the teacher's very clear explanations. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, and for some, their progress is outstanding. They learn well as a result of activities and work that is planned very closely to their needs, their rates of progress and targets within their individual education plans. The achievement of pupils from British or Asian British Pakistani and Black Caribbean heritages has also improved and is now good overall. The school is rapidly closing the gaps in attainment between these groups of pupils and all pupils nationally. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual starting points also make good progress and achieve well because of the school's good induction, early assessment and intensive one-to-one support.

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## Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and enables most pupils to make good progress over time. Teaching observed during the inspection was occasionally outstanding, for example in physical education and art and design, where specialist teachers' expertise and subject knowledge ensure that all pupils make excellent progress. Children benefit from consistently good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Exciting and motivating activities, both indoors and outside, promote rapid progress and the effective development of skills.

Teaching is often characterised by high expectations, teachers' strong subject and technical knowledge, rapid pace, challenging questioning and activities adjusted for the varying ability range. These lessons result in pupils making rapid progress. For example, in an outstanding physical education lesson in Year 3, the specialist teacher used his expertise to model ways of passing a ball, and employed a number of excellent small group activities to reinforce the skills within a competitive atmosphere. Marking is very good, contains clear next steps, and contributes to pupils' good progress. Pupils respond well to teachers' marking and use the information effectively to work towards their targets. The vast majority of parents and carers feel their children are taught well. As one said 'The teaching and learning are so good and that is why the children enjoy attending'. Pupils report that one of the reasons they enjoy school is because 'Teachers make lessons interesting'.

However, on occasions learning is too closely directed by the teacher, which limits opportunities for pupils to make decisions for themselves or work independently. Sometimes activities are not sufficiently well-matched to the needs of more-able pupils. Similarly, there are occasions when the teacher does not check, often enough, that all pupils have fully understood the tasks they have been set.

Good teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils help one another in small groups and paired work, as well as supporting those who, for example, found physical activities difficult during a physical education lesson. The teaching of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. Staff make effective use of a wide range of strategies and resources, including visual aids, prompts, interactive technologies such as handheld devices, interactive whiteboards and laptops. As a result, these pupils quickly gain confidence in acquiring English and they use these blossoming skills to make good progress across all subjects. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from good teaching to accelerate their learning, for example, by providing ongoing reminders and breaking down tasks in stages.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' conduct in lessons and their behaviour around the school are good. Pupils, parents and carers all agree that behaviour is good. Pupils' report that behaviour is typically good and those with specific needs have seen their behaviour improve as a result of successful, focused support and engaging teaching. Although pupils'

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attitudes to learning are good, there are times when some pupils sit back in lessons and are not sufficiently involved, particularly where too much of the lesson is led by the teacher. Pupils' confirm that bullying is very rare because everyone gets on so well with each other. This is confirmed in school records. They report that, on the rare occasions that bullying does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. The school makes its expectations of pupils' behaviour abundantly clear and pupils' respond well to these and to the awards they earn for doing so. Pupils' enjoy their diverse school community. Adults and children from a wide range of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds celebrate and respect each other's similarities and differences very well. For example, during discussions, pupils said, 'Even though we are all different, we are actually like one big family here'. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, particularly cyber- and physical-bullying. Pupils are unequivocal that they feel safe in school. They say that the security of the premises, and having an adult to turn to, contribute to this.

Most pupils are punctual to school and lessons. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, and markedly so this year, so that it is now above the national average. Persistent absence has reduced significantly as a result of the school's targeted work with individual families. High attendance is celebrated regularly for individuals, classes and year groups through assembly themes and rewards.

**Leadership and management**

The good leadership and management reported at the last inspection have been maintained, and some aspects, including governance, have improved. Leaders at all levels are passionate about improving provision and enabling pupils to achieve their potential. This is very evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage, for example, where highly effective induction processes and strong links with parents and carers promote children's good progress.

The headteacher has been relentless in embedding ambition and driving improvement, supported well by the deputy headteacher and senior team. The impact of which can be seen in pupils' good achievement, the creation of a vibrant, engaging, creative curriculum that includes outstanding provision for physical education, art and design, and pupils' improved attendance rates. This track record of success demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement. Governance is good. An experienced and committed Chair of the Governing Body provides strong leadership and ensures that the governing body and its associated committees hold the school to account for its performance and that the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Parents, carers and staff also agree that the school is well led and managed.

Systems to manage the performance of teachers and help them improve their practice are implemented consistently and have resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching. Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced a rigorous monitoring system, which clearly identifies strengths and areas for development in teachers' practice. However, on some occasions the quality of teaching is judged to

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be better than pupils' learning and progress in the lesson. Leaders' promote equality and tackle discrimination effectively, for example in their work to reduce gaps in the achievements of Asian or Asian British Pakistani, and Black Caribbean pupils in the school.

Leaders and managers' promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through, for example, a broad, balanced and lively curriculum which promotes enjoyment and effective learning for pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds. It provides opportunities for them to learn about diversity across the United Kingdom and abroad. Leaders have worked exceptionally hard to engage with parents and carers, including those hard to reach, in order to work in partnership to improve pupils' achievement over time.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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](http://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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.**



July 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Benson Community School, Birmingham B18 5TD**

You may remember that a team of inspectors visited your school at the end of the summer term. I am now writing to let you know what we found out. I would like to start by thanking you for making us feel so welcome and speaking to us about your school. We enjoyed meeting with you, seeing you learning in lessons and hearing some of you read. Thank you also to those who completed a questionnaire.

I am pleased to say that you go to a good school that has many strengths. You make good progress in most subjects, both in lessons and during the time that you are at Benson Community School. By the time you leave Year 6, you attain similar standards to other children of your age across the country. You work hard in lessons, and your behaviour and attendance are good. You feel safe, and know what to do if something worries or concerns you. You make outstanding progress in art and design and physical education, where you have experts teaching you. You and your parents and carers told us in the questionnaires that you all enjoy school and think the teaching is good, and we agree. Your headteacher, governors and teachers are all working hard to improve your achievement. Your teachers make lessons interesting, and plan different activities for you so that you all make progress, including those of you who speak a different language at home.

There are a few things which would help your school become even better in the future. We have asked your headteacher and staff to look at ways in which you can be even more engaged in lessons, for example by making more decisions for yourself. We have also asked teachers to make some of the work more challenging for those of you who find learning easy, and to check that you are all making good progress during each lesson. You can also help too by making sure that you think carefully when you are asked to make choices about your work and by continuing to come to school on time and every day, and always trying your best in lessons.

I wish you the very best for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

David Thomas Hatchett  
Lead inspector

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