

# **Beacon Primary School**

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number131580Local AuthorityWalsallInspection number341167

**Inspection dates** 11–12 November 2009

**Reporting inspector** Anthony Byrne

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 3–11
Gender of pupils Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll 280

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

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### **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors including parent governors. They also talked informally with parents at the school and in the children's centre. They observed the school's and centre's work. They also looked at lesson monitoring records, assessment and other records about pupils, policies and reports and data analysis from the local authority. They analysed parents' views in 85 questionnaires returned and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The Lighthouse Centre was inspected at the same time as the school and findings are incorporated in this report.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress and the standards pupils reach, particularly in writing
- how well teachers use assessment information to help pupils make progress, particularly boys
- the impact of leadership in improving pupils' learning.

#### Information about the school

Beacon Primary School is larger than average. The Lighthouse Children's Centre, managed by the governing body, provides integrated services for families, including day care for two to three year olds, a playgroup and 'wraparound' care. Children are enrolled in the school nursery class in the term in which they become three years old and 'wraparound' continues to be available. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school serves an area of high density housing. The school population is mainly White British, with a few pupils from other ethnic groups, some of whom have a first language other than English. The largest minority groups are White and Black Caribbean and Indian. A higher than average proportion of pupils is identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. These relate to a range of barriers to learning, including moderate learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties.

## **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

### The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

### **Main findings**

Beacon Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Attainment is average and progress is satisfactory. It looks after all pupils well and helps a significant number to overcome barriers to progress and well-being. The majority of pupils start school with below average skills for their age. By the end of Year 6, girls make better progress than boys because their writing is more accurate and sustained. Results in national tests in English and mathematics dipped in 2008. The school took steps to remedy the underlying contributory factors to the drop in the pupils' performance, by improving the procedures by which it assessed the pupils' work. Consequently in 2009, national test results were average and an improvement not only on the 2008 results, but also on those of 2007. Current Year 6 pupils are making steady progress and are on track to meet the school's targets for 2010. Younger children achieve well in the children's centre and Early Years Foundation Stage. Strong support for well-being in both settings boosts their start to school life.

The headteacher is ambitious for her school and staff are beginning to reflect her high expectations of pupils. Since the last inspection, self-evaluation has strengthened and is now more accurate. The management team has grown both in numbers and expertise. The senior management team monitors and judges teaching accurately but does not challenge it rigorously enough to improve when it is satisfactory. Improved whole-school assessment procedures are having an impact on the pupils' performance. At the same time, the previously good pastoral care has been sustained and improved. The focus on the pupils' care and well-being, however, has distracted the school from challenging less than good teaching. Thus, the capacity of the school to sustain improvement is satisfactory. The governing body knows the community well and responds to its needs. Governors are supportive of the school but do not challenge the school enough for it to make rapid improvement.

Teaching is too variable but is satisfactory overall. In the pockets of good or better teaching, pupils are eager to learn because the teacher expects them to work hard and explains to them how well they are doing and how to improve. The use of learning support assistants to help small groups of pupils to overcome learning difficulties is usually good, but the extent to which more able pupils are given appropriate challenges varies. In some lessons teachers strike a good balance between activities so that learning proceeds at a good pace, but in others pupils are passive for too long and progress is more restricted. Following improvements to assessment procedures, teachers track progress accurately, but feedback to pupils to help them to know how to improve is inconsistent. Not enough is demanded from boys in how much writing they produce and this is linked to lack of support in planning.

Pupils feel safe and are keen to keep healthy by eating well and exercising. Generally, pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do well, whether working with help or independently. They behave well at almost all times, except when younger pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long and they lose concentration. Their response to the Remembrance assembly or silent reflection in class was sensitive and thoughtful. Although they are preparing for future education and employment by learning skills of working together and independently, low attendance and the unpunctuality of some are a drawback. The school has improved the range of opportunities pupils have for writing. Regular reading sessions are well organised, as is mathematics. Although some work is done on other cultures, pupils do not have enough opportunities to explore the world beyond their immediate community or to be creative.

The school deserves the good reputation it has locally for care, guidance and support of the pupils. The school and children's centre work exceptionally hard to involve families and agencies in the best interests of children. Although some very demanding cases have to be dealt with, the school makes time to watch over every child. Parents praise the unstinting efforts the school makes to help families in times of difficulty. The school and children's centre provide many opportunities for parents and carers to be involved and to overcome difficulties which might hinder children's progress.

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

- Raise the proportion of good or better teaching throughout the school by:
  - linking professional development activities more closely to the findings from the monitoring and evaluation of lessons.
- Ensure that boys' writing improves by:
  - helping boys to plan their work more carefully so that they are able to write at greater length.
- Urgently improve attendance by:
  - using the good relationship with parents and carers to help them realise the links between good attendance and attainment.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

3

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory. The pupils' performance in the national tests in 2009 was average in both English and mathematics, an improvement on previous years This picture of attainment is confirmed by the pupils' work in lesson. Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning, including those with previously challenging behaviour. They work well with each other and, in a minority of lessons, more able pupils work well independently and are keen to take on challenges. This was so in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils came up with a variety of ways of solving an equation. In a Year 2 lesson, a small group of pupils with moderate learning difficulties struggled initially to understand how to tell the time. With intervention from learning support staff, the pupils successfully mastered the task.

Pupils start school with below average skills. Children make good progress towards the expected early learning goals in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are helped by having become used to learning through the children's centre. Progress in lessons in Years 1 and 2 is less fast and is satisfactory. This is because, in some lessons, tasks are not clear and pupils are not challenged to apply their previous learning systematically. Pupils with a wide range of specific learning needs and the small numbers of looked-after children also make satisfactory progress. The very small groups of Indian and White and Black Caribbean pupils make similar progress to others. By the time pupils are at the end of Year 6, progress is satisfactory. Girls, however, develop better writing skills than boys, because they sustain their writing at greater length and use a more varied vocabulary. A significant proportion of boys do not make enough progress in English, particularly in writing. However, overall, all groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of school.

Pupils consider that the school looks after them well and makes them feel safe. They are sure that they can always go to an adult for any help they might need. They know a lot about keeping healthy through eating well and exercising and many take advantage of the good food and active games that the school offers They are confident about avoiding dangers outside of school. Because they take pride in their school and care for each other, pupils behave well. Older pupils contribute very responsibly to the welfare of younger ones. The school council is successfully developing its decision-making skills and recently showed enterprise in running a healthy tuck shop. Pupils are making good links with the local community in finding out about the local council and by helping charities. They know a little about communities beyond their locality from lessons. In their response to the Remembrance Day assembly, pupils demonstrated their capacity to reflect and take part in school events. At other times they were clearly uplifted through singing and dancing. Pupils have a firm grasp of right and wrong and a strong sense of justice. They prepare satisfactorily for their future economic well-being and education through the application of their basic skills, through the way they work together, and, through their awareness of the arrangements for moving to secondary school. However, the poor attendance and punctuality of some pupils hinder the development of their skills and reliability. Overall attendance is low and school records show it has declined further in 2009.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3	
Taking into account:  Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being		
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		

### How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Classroom routines are well established and pupils know what is expected of them so they usually get on with activities quickly. A good feature of many lessons is how learning assistants adapt work to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and other barriers to learning through small group work or by checking pupils' understanding of whole-class teaching. The extent to which higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged varies. Some tasks, such as writing about a fantasy world, stretch them, but at other times they spend too long on the same work as others. Mostly teachers strike a satisfactory balance between activities. Work goes along at a good pace whilst allowing pupils time to think and work independently before coming together to review learning. However, in some lessons pupils are passive listeners for too long, or the task is unclear and they become confused and distracted. Teachers make sure pupils have regular and varied opportunities for writing, but they do not guide pupils enough on planning the structure of the writing. Boys in particular tend to, and are allowed to, write briefly and so do not practise a wide range of skills or develop vocabulary. The use of new technologies, such as interactive whiteboards and pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT), in lessons is underdeveloped.

A good feature of assessment is that teachers mark work regularly and check each other's judgements on attainment. This gives them a clear idea of pupils' progress and strengths and weaknesses. It is clear from records that teachers know how well pupils are doing. However, the way this is then shared with pupils varies between classes. Some marking, for instance in Year 6 English books, gives pupils very clear guidance on what to improve. Marking, however, is not always detailed enough to be helpful in all

other subject areas. Generally pupils know their current level, but cannot explain what they will have to do to improve. Tracking charts on the classroom walls show where pupils have reached, but not where they should aim to be.

The curriculum emphasises literacy and numeracy but gives much less attention to ICT. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the range of writing opportunities for pupils and the way pupils are grouped in lessons. A strong feature of the curriculum is the provision for music. The school, however, acknowledges that creative work in art and in design and technology is too limited. The well-considered personal, social and health education supports pupils in exploring their feelings and concerns. Children learn about other cultures, times and places. A range of visits and visitors help pupils to engage with and enjoy learning. There are wide-ranging opportunities for clubs and sports, much appreciated by pupils, especially girls' football.

The school's sympathetic understanding of children's backgrounds and needs has led to good arrangements for care, guidance and support. Links with the community are very strong because of the many ways that parents and carers are invited into the school, both in term and holiday times. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported and monitored and gain self-esteem and confidence through their contact with supportive adults, especially the way teachers encourage them in class. Those with special educational needs are well supported and their progress is carefully monitored. The guidance given on good behaviour and making reparation when at fault has a positive effect on personal development. A paediatrician provides an extra dimension of care with termly visits to deal with referrals.

Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. A minor matter noticed by the team was put right immediately. Steps taken to support attendance are also satisfactory and the school is extra vigilant when there might be cause for concern about a child. As yet the school's efforts have not raised low attendance. There are very good links with local police who get to know children and parents informally and who provide a community surgery on site. Links with secondary schools are good.

#### 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?

The school has moved forward since the last inspection because of the caring and dedicated leadership of the headteacher. The headteacher is well supported by her recently expanded management team. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and the

headteacher and senior team know clearly where improvements are needed. Staff at all levels are increasingly accepting of senior leaders' ambitions for the school and their high expectations for pupils. Teaching is monitored regularly and judged accurately. However, teaching that is less than good is not challenged robustly enough to secure improvement and consistently good quality classroom practice. Procedures for checking pupils' performance and progress have improved significantly in the last year in both regularity and accuracy. Nevertheless, teachers' checks on pupils' learning are still too casual. The curriculum has improved through the introduction of more extended writing activities in subjects other than English.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors have improved their involvement in the school since the last inspection. They have accepted additional responsibility for the children's centre because they know the community needs it. However, they have not yet challenged the school enough to bring about the improvements that would lead to good outcomes for the pupils. The emphasis on the care and well-being of the pupils is working well and the school is a harmonious community that celebrates diversity with no evidence of discrimination. At all levels, the school successfully strives to value all groups of pupils equally well.

Partnerships are strong with parents and carers and with agencies that offer support. The school involves parents well, including those who are hard to reach. The literacy classes for adults and the 'come dine with us' programme are particularly effective. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and are supported by regular contact and good partnership with agencies. Staff are appropriately trained and informed on a need-to-know basis.

The school's knowledge of, and response to, the local community are a real strength. Parents who serve as governors meet other parents and carers around school and a local councillor and a vicar on the governing body contribute to the school's awareness of economic and faith issues. At a local level the contribution to community cohesion is particularly good, but the national and international dimensions are not as strong and, although this aspect is satisfactory overall, governors are aware that this is an area for further development.

#### These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
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	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

The school's records show that children's skills and abilities are below those expected when the children join the school. This is particularly so in their communication skills and in their personal and social development. Children respond well to the patient and caring efforts by staff and particularly good progress is made in personal development. Children learn together well and mix happily during social times.

Children make good progress and are working confidently within the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception class. Boys take longer to perform as well as girls because more of them start at lower levels, but they do make up ground. Daily lessons to learn letters and sounds move learning to read on at a good pace. More opportunities for practising writing have been introduced as a result of improved assessment procedures. In both reading and writing improvements have been made. Children were assessed as reaching higher levels in reading and writing in 2009 than in 2008, demonstrating the impact of improvements.

Overall, provision is well led and managed. There are a good balance and variety of activities, some led by adults and others that children choose for themselves. The children respond well to learning outdoors, but the range of what they do is not as broad as the indoors curriculum and the school acknowledges the need to develop outdoors learning further.

There are good opportunities for parents and carers to be involved. Staff are well trained and engage with pupils well. This stage of learning is well led and good links are made with the next stage.

#### 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
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The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were happy with their children's experience of school. The vast majority agree that children enjoy school. Some commented on how pleasant and welcoming the headteacher and staff are. A few felt that the school did not help them enough to support their child's learning and a very small minority stated that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors agree that children enjoy school. They saw that steps are being taken to give more support so that parents can help learning. The school deals with the very small amount of bad behaviour well, making sure that its unacceptability is understood.

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beacon 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 280 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	68	26	31	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	72	23	27	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	60	30	35	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	60	31	36	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	64	29	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	61	25	29	5	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	51	38	45	2	2	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)	43	51	35	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	52	36	42	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	46	39	46	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	52	35	41	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	47	55	35	41	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	66	27	32	0	0	1	1

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 oustanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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:	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.
	<ul> <li>The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>The quality of teaching.</li> <li>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.



14 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beacon Primary School, Willenhall WV12 5HA

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to Beacon School and for talking to us about your work and how the school helps you in all sorts of ways. We think you go to a satisfactory school. You are right to be proud of your school. It is a safe place for everyone to be and everybody is made to feel they are welcome and well looked after. Your headteacher, the staff and governors are doing the right things to make the school even better for you.

By the time you reach the end of Year 6 you are doing as well as expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of you are doing even better than that, for example in the mathematics lesson I saw. Boys are keeping up with girls in reading and mathematics, but their writing tends to be a bit brief, so they are not using all the skills they should be developing. Your teachers have already tried to provide a lot of interesting opportunities for writing and we have asked them to help you more with planning what and how much you will write. Teachers are good at knowing how well you are doing your work. We have asked them to tell you more about what you should do to get to the next level of success. Younger pupils are making satisfactory progress. We think you enjoy learning best when you have a real challenge and work on it independently or with a little help from the teacher or learning assistants.

One of the best features of your school is the many ways your families and carers get involved right from when they take the very young ones to the children's centre and the nursery. The parent support adviser is always ready to help them. One of the things you should work together on is getting to school every day and on time.

Some other really special things we will remember from our visit are how well older pupils look after younger ones, seeing that they eat well at lunch, and play happily together. All of you feel you have someone to go to who will help. We were very impressed by how thoughtful you all were on Remembrance Day. How keen you boys and girls are on football! Your coach is very proud of his teams, especially the one with boys and girls playing side by side.

We wish you all the best for the future. With your help the school can get to the heights the headteacher is determined it will reach.

Yours faithfully Tony Byrne Lead inspector

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