

Galton Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135288
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	329072
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	534
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	18
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jules Donaldson
Headteacher	Janet Cole
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brasshouse Lane Smethwick B66 1BA
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Galton Valley opened as a primary school in September 2007, as a result of the amalgamation of the previous infant and junior schools. It occupies new, purpose-built accommodation, though the younger Nursery-age children are accommodated in a new building on the other side of a main road that houses the Children's Centre, which is managed by the school. The Children's Centre offers, among a wide range of support services, year-round childcare and before- and after-school provision for younger children. The school also runs a breakfast club. Further Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for older Nursery-age children and those of Reception age in the main school building.

A very large majority of pupils are from ethnic minority groups and more than three quarters of these are of Bangladeshi heritage. The remainder represent a wide range of ethnicities, though there are significant groups of pupils from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. Almost all pupils from ethnic minorities speak English as an additional language and many join school with very limited English. A large proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Its key strength is the high level of care and pastoral support for pupils. Many parents were extremely positive about this, saying such things as 'the school treats everyone equally' and 'the staff are very helpful and understanding with problems'. The school is an extremely harmonious community and pupils of all races get on exceptionally well. This stems from the high priority that all adults give to ensuring that the needs of each individual are met. There have been some notable successes in this provision, which has enabled some pupils who have problems to play a full part in the life of the school.

These high levels of pastoral care result in pupils developing well into sensible and responsible young people. They are prepared well for their future education and to take their place in society. Pupils behave well and make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school by willingly taking on tasks and serving on the school council, for instance. They enjoy school a good deal, particularly because the curriculum has been planned well to be interesting and engaging. For example, the younger pupils were enthused by their work on the circus, following the visit of a clown. Attendance is only satisfactory, despite the school's best efforts, as too many parents take their children on extended holidays.

Children have very limited skills when they start in the Nursery, and the vast majority have little or no English. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with the bilingual support staff ensuring that children are developing their skills in spoken English well. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they have reached below average standards in English and mathematics and this indicates good progress and achievement from their starting points. Standards in writing, which have been a focus for the school recently, have improved well, almost catching up with those in reading in Year 6. Pupils make good progress because teaching is good overall. Lessons are typified by active learning and much use of discussion to ensure that pupils' understanding of English is developed. Although marking often notes how successful pupils' learning has been, it does not always point out what they need to do next to improve their work. This is linked to an area for development in academic guidance and support. Although specific areas have been identified for each pupil to learn next, pupils do not always know what these are.

At the root of the school's success are good leadership and management, with clear direction given by the strong senior leadership team. There is a very clear determination, shared by all staff and governors, to provide the best for the pupils and to strive for continual improvement. Although governors are supportive, they are not sufficiently involved in first-hand monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Links with parents are developing well, as the Children's Centre and other initiatives run by the school are particularly effective in building parental support for their children's education. For instance, the Inspire workshops were very much appreciated and have led to greater parental involvement. The school has come a long way in its short life and is well placed to continue on the upward path.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage as all adults care for them very well. The good levels of care and the good relationships between adults and children ensure that children make good advances in their personal and social development. In particular,

bilingual support assistants develop children's skills in English very well as they use the children's home language to ensure they understand, but give children every encouragement to try out their own spoken English in a supportive environment.

Children are taught well and so make good progress in their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. In particular, good opportunities are given for children to experiment with mark-making and developing writing skills. For instance, the visit of a clown had inspired a group of boys to concentrate on their writing for a protracted period. A good variety of activities is planned, but the range available for children to choose for themselves is sometimes limited. Planning is clear, with achievable targets set for the children, but the use of outdoors as a learning resource in all areas of learning is not always planned for.

The Children's Centre gives children a good start to their educational journey and maintains very close links with school staff. Together they have developed good systems for assessment which have clear next steps recorded, but these are not yet fully embedded in all classes. All childcare requirements are met and all staff have appropriate qualifications. Leadership and management of both the Children's Centre and the school's provision are good. Leaders have evaluated their effectiveness well and have good plans for further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils know what they need to learn next to improve their work and that teachers consistently use these next steps when they mark pupils' work.
- Improve governors' role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children have very limited skills and knowledge when they start school. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but their standards are still exceptionally low when they start in Year 1. Good progress continues through the school and the gap between pupils' standards and age-related expectations is closing. Standards are below average by the end of Year 6, which indicates good achievement. Provisional assessments for the current Year 2 show a good improvement from last year, although standards are still exceptionally low. There has been a particularly good improvement in writing in Year 2 this year, reflecting the focus that has been put on this subject. This focus has also resulted in good improvements in writing further up the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect one another and have a strong sense of community. A few parents expressed concerns about bullying. However, pupils are confident that incidences are minor and are dealt with very well by staff. They say that they feel very safe in school. Pupils' understanding of Britain as a diverse society is good because there is a good focus on this within the curriculum and in assemblies. There are strong links with the local community and pupils make a strong contribution to the community by organising collections for charity, for instance.

Although some parents voiced concerns about standards of behaviour, inspection evidence points to the contrary, and behaviour is good, especially in lessons. The school council has an effective voice and promotes healthy eating by deciding on sensible menus. Pupils are very

active in break and lunch times through well-organised activities and are well aware of the attributes of a healthy lifestyle. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has been partially successful. However, it is still only satisfactory, due to the numbers of parents who take their children on extended holidays.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are good relationships in classes, which ensure that pupils are keen to learn and do well. Teachers are particularly good at encouraging the development of speaking and listening skills by the use of small group and paired discussions, which develop pupils' spoken English well. A further strength is that pupils are encouraged, from a young age, to be independent and make choices for themselves, for instance about how they are to record their work. The key areas for development are in teachers' marking and in the match of objectives to pupils' needs and abilities. Although marking is positive and encouraging, it does not always point out to pupils how they can improve. There are times in lessons when the objective set is too wide-ranging and does not match the range of abilities in the class. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are therefore enabled to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has recently designed a curriculum that has been thought out well to engage the interest of the pupils. However, this is relatively new and is not yet having a major impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils are given good opportunities to use their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills in other subjects. A good range of visits and visitors adds first-hand understanding to pupils' learning, and outings, such as the cycle ride along the canal towpath into Birmingham, provide them with valuable extra experiences. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education. Music has a high priority, with all Year 3 learning the cornet, for instance. Very good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as their needs are identified early and very clear plans are made for their future learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong focus on promoting pupils' development and well-being, especially for the more vulnerable children. A particular strength is the care taken to treat every pupil as an individual and provide the care and support each one needs. All groups of learners, including minority ethnic groups and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are very well supported and, as a result, equal opportunities for pupils are outstanding. The school cares for these children with a passion. All health and safety and legal requirements for safeguarding were met in full at the time of the inspection.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is monitored well and this information is used well to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind. This enables suitable support programmes to be put in place. The effectiveness of these strategies are then evaluated very effectively to establish whether they have provided good value. Assessment helps pupils to know what they

have achieved and what they have not yet achieved, but it does not effectively show pupils what their next steps in learning should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and, as a result, they promote and direct improvement well. The school's monitoring and self-evaluation are good, especially in promoting equal opportunities. Leaders are aware of the barriers to progress and work together well to improve pupils' learning and development. Challenging targets are set for all pupils. The targets are moderated and evaluated regularly to ensure improved performance. The promotion of community cohesion is good at all levels. The school is aware of its responsibilities and carries them out well. Links with other providers and services are good and promote the good care and well-being of pupils. For example, the expertise of local secondary schools is used well to provide extra opportunities for pupils. Many governors are new to their roles and, although they are keen and very supportive, they have not received relevant training and are unsure of their role in first-hand monitoring and evaluating.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Galton Valley Primary School, Smethwick, B66 1BA

Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work and hearing from you how much you enjoy school. We are not surprised that you enjoy it so much as it is a good school. We hope that Mrs Martin enjoyed the surprise party you were organising!

These are some of the best things we found.

- The school works extremely hard to make sure that all of you have the same opportunities and, because of this, you all get on very well together.
- You make good progress because you are being taught well.
- You make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The Children's Centre is providing lots of things to help your parents know how to help you learn at home.
- Lots of interesting things are arranged for you to learn. For instance, we really enjoyed looking at the work that the younger ones were doing on circuses and clowns and looking at the displays some others had done after visits from some people from Africa.
- All adults take really good care of you and you are developing well into sensible and responsible young people.
- Your headteacher and all the staff have good plans to make your school even better.

These are the things that we have suggested should be improved.

- You do not always know what you need to do to improve your work and teachers do not always tell you this when they mark your work.
- The governors do not come into school enough to check on how well the school is doing.

I know you will help your school to become even better by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie

Lead inspector