

Bellfield Infant School (NC)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103289
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323793
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	184
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Kennedy
Headteacher	Margaret Brown
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Vineyard Road Birmingham B31 1PT
Telephone number	01214 644855
Fax number	01214 644854

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and about one quarter from minority ethnic backgrounds. The main languages spoken by these pupils are French, Arabic and Chinese, but none are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is high at about four times the national average. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nursery class is very low with most children having poor literacy and social skills, though good physical skills. A small minority of children join the EYFS Reception class not having attended Nursery here or at any other setting. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, most with moderate learning difficulties or speech and communication difficulties.

The school has and manages on-site childcare provision for 0 to 3-year-olds and a breakfast club.

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. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and the curriculum is excellent. Standards are broadly average and pupils achieve well, and some very well. Parents are very pleased with the school. In responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, many parents praised the good support and help their children receive. They say their children enjoy school and the great majority feel that the headteacher and staff are approachable and helpful.

Standards have varied between subjects but are rising in all areas. Writing is a particular strength with above average standards and pupils making good and sometimes excellent progress. However, spelling is not always accurate enough. Standards of reading are broadly average and improving as a result of the focus on providing books that interest different groups of pupils. Numeracy skills are broadly average and rapidly improving.

Teaching is good and planned effectively to challenge, interest and ensure pupils' concentration. The use of piano music and soft lighting is an excellent way to help pupils concentrate and make good progress. The quality of support for pupils is generally good although occasionally teaching assistants miss a few pupils who need support when they find work hard. Briefly, the pace of progress slows for these pupils. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is sensitive and effective in helping these pupils make good progress. Marking is good and gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The curriculum is exceptionally good. The school has recognised the importance of providing experiences that capture pupils' interest so that they want to learn, achieve well and enjoy their success. For example, African drumming not only captivates pupils' interest as part of music, it plays a major part in improving their concentration, especially boys', and therefore helps achievement and enjoyment in other subjects. The range of out-of-school activities is wide and the level of participation is very high.

Pupils' excellent personal development is reflected in their exceptional behaviour. Pupils behave with enormous consideration for each other and adults, and have a first-rate understanding of, and respect for, the cultures of pupils and people from different ethnic backgrounds. Their knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles is impressive. They feel safe in school and are confident that they could go to anyone for help if they needed it. They take on responsibilities readily and responsibly. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school has very thorough procedures that ensure pupils are safe and secure. Links with external agencies to support pupils educationally and socially are excellent and the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Academic guidance is good, and although pupils are not always sure what their targets are they know they will usually be helped to do well in their work.

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher and governors provide exceptionally clear direction. They have been highly successful in closing gaps in attainment between groups of pupils and ensuring that all groups of pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed. All staff are committed to further improvement. There is a clear understanding of what the school needs to do next. Rising standards in all subjects and constant success in curricular innovation demonstrate that the capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children receive a good start to school life in this happy and exciting EYFS. They settle in quickly and grow in confidence, enthusiasm and self-esteem in the friendly environment. Parents are delighted with the good progress their children make and appreciate the way staff involves them in their children's learning. Consistently good teaching moves children's learning on at a fast pace from their low starting points and by the end of Reception, the majority reach the national average in most areas of learning. Literacy skills are a little below average, especially in writing, but children make excellent progress in developing personal, social and emotional skills. Activities and tasks are carefully planned to meet the needs of all children. Staff focus on increasing the pace of developing language skills, and although this work is in its early stages, it is starting to have a positive impact. Children move independently from one activity to another and are happy to approach staff for assistance. The classroom environment inside and outside is stimulating, and allows children to explore, participate, share, try out activities and have fun. The provision for children's welfare is outstanding and the guidance and support for parents to continue children's learning in the home are excellent. Leadership and management are good. Assessment procedures have been identified by the school as an area for improvement, and, following a review, are now providing staff with good information to help them plan.

In the day care unit children are well supported in their learning and development. Staff fully embrace the values of keeping children happy, safe and secure and the detailed attention paid to children's welfare is outstanding. There is effective monitoring and review of provision leading to sharing of good practice in ensuring all children reach their full potential. Staff make sure that all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are fully included in all activities. Outstanding partnership with parents and other agencies contributes effectively to children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of literacy by ensuring pupils spell accurately.
- Make sure that pupils receive consistently good support in class to help them understand what they are doing in lessons and to reinforce what the next steps in their learning are.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils from all backgrounds achieve well and a significant minority of pupils achieve exceptionally well because they enjoy learning and want to do well. Past underachievement by boys has noticeably reduced. Above average standards in writing are due to the successful efforts to encourage independent writing, widen vocabulary, provide writing opportunities in other subjects and develop complex sentence construction skills. Spelling is erratic but pupils' grasp of letters, sounds and word construction is improving, though it still has some way to go. Reading is improving, with many pupils making good progress in developing fluency and ability to read complex sentences and a wide range of vocabulary. Books that interest pupils are helping improve reading skills, especially of boys, some of whom have not made as good progress as other pupils in the past. Standards in numeracy are rising rapidly due to a focus on reinforcing basic calculation skills and ensuring pupils understand the mathematical processes they use.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the early recognition of learning needs and effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy school. One parent commented, 'I know he enjoys it because that is all he talks about when he walks home!' Relationships are excellent, and pupils support, care for, and help each other. For example, older pupils enjoy befriending younger pupils at break times. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes, outstanding social and community awareness and knowledge of their own and other cultures. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and pupils feel that their suggestions for improvements are followed up. Many pupils are involved in raising funds for local, national and worldwide causes. Attendance is good compared with that of similar schools and improving because of the school's hard work to impress on parents the importance of regular attendance. Pupils have a thorough grasp of how to stay healthy and safe and enjoy sporting activities, such as swimming and games. Their mature social skills and their increasing competence in basic skills prepare them well for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching meets the needs of the great majority of pupils through challenging, well paced work that successfully catches pupils' attention and enthusiasm. It is excellent where the teacher enables pupils working individually or in small groups to concentrate and focus on their work through the clever use of restful lighting and music. Teachers and assistants generally support pupils' learning well. While efforts to improve spelling are starting to have a positive impact, teachers are not always persistent enough in ensuring pupils spell consistently accurately. Marking is generally good. Teachers give clear indications of how well pupils perform and how they can improve. For the most part, support for individual pupils is effective, but occasionally teaching assistants miss pupils who find work hard or do not know what the next steps in their learning are. Excellent relationships ensure pupils gain the confidence to contribute to discussion and this helps their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to meet pupils' personal and academic learning needs. Links between subjects work successfully, making subjects relevant to pupils. For example, linking healthy eating, science and cooking gives everyday relevance to pupils, and the use of books that boys like helps engage boys in reading. Numeracy and literacy skills are reinforced by their incorporation into other subjects. Enquiry and practical approaches in science and in design and technology maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. The wide range of enrichment activities engages pupils successfully in enjoying their learning and improving their progress. The range of out-of-school activities is very wide for such young pupils and they are well attended. Among other things, pupils take part in gymnastics, art, dance and choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and the quality of care is outstanding. This is enhanced by exceptionally good relationships with parents. Safeguarding procedures are particularly robust and thorough, and the school fully meets safeguarding requirements. Vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and receive effective support from school and external support agencies. Pupils needing to be in school early are well looked after in the breakfast club. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress and achievements are accurately assessed and this helps teachers plan work to meet pupils' individual needs and to provide support where it is needed. Pupils know they have targets but are a little unclear about what they are, although they know they are helped to do well in their work. The learning mentor works very effectively with pupils and families, helping identify learning or social problems and providing support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, supported effectively by colleagues, provides excellent direction for the school's work. At other levels, leadership is very good and developing fast, as new staff rapidly gain expertise and experience. The focus on providing a safe, happy environment in which pupils can learn happily and develop excellent personal skills is particularly successful and is significant in the drive for improvements in standards. Monitoring and evaluation give a clear picture of how to improve. Although improvements in pupils' spelling and consistency in support for pupils in lessons have not been quite as fast as they could be, the school has made a good start on actions to develop these. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The school works successfully to ensure pupils achieve well, whatever their backgrounds or ability, and is closing the gap in achievement between different groups of pupils rapidly. Efforts to promote community cohesion are exceptionally good and lead to pupils' excellent understanding, knowledge and respect for different cultures, religions and beliefs of people in Britain and around the world. Governance is excellent. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and experience to questioning and challenging the headteacher, and supporting the school in driving up standards.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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?	1
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	1
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**

30 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Belfield Infant School, Birmingham, B31 1PT

Thank you for being so polite and welcoming to us during the inspection. We spoke to many of you in lessons, around school and in meetings. You told us about what your school is like and were very helpful.

These are the main things we found out about your school.

- This is a good school.
- You make good progress in most of the work you do. Some of you make excellent progress.
- Teaching is good and sometimes excellent. Teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting so that you learn well. They organise lots of really good activities to help you enjoy learning.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work hard to make sure the school improves.
- You enjoy school. Your behaviour is excellent and you work very hard.
- The way you treat other pupils and adults, and the way you get on with people from different backgrounds is excellent.
- You carry out any responsibilities you have well.
- You have a brilliant understanding of how to stay healthy! You eat healthily and nearly all of you enjoy doing physical activities and sports.
- The school is very safe and the adults look after you outstandingly well.

To improve things, we have asked the school to do the following.

- Raise standards of literacy by ensuring pupils spell accurately.
- Make sure that pupils always receive support to help them understand what they are doing in lessons and what they need to do next to improve their learning.

You can help in several ways. Check the spelling of words you are not sure of or do not use all of the time, and make sure you know what your targets are and how to reach them.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley

Lead inspector