



The Arden Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103324
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276891
Inspection dates 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005
Reporting inspector Tony Dobell RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Baker Street
School category	Community		Sparkhill
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Birmingham, West Midlands B11 4SF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 772 7702
Number on roll	495	Fax number	0121 772 0643
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr Tony Lacey

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 10 October 2005 - 11 October 2005	Inspection number 276891
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Arden is a very large school serving an inner city area of Birmingham with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. All pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. A high proportion of pupils have no spoken English when they join the Nursery. There are well-above-average proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties or disabilities. The turnover of pupils during the year is higher than in most schools and a number of new pupils are from asylum-seeking families. Many of these pupils join classes throughout the school having had either no previous formal education or a substantial time out of school. There has been significant re-building in the school and more is planned.

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 with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Children make outstanding progress in the Foundation Stage but, because they start from such a low base, their standards are below average at the end of Reception. In Years 1 to 6, pupils achieve very well overall. Those who attend the school continuously for their primary education reach average standards in English and science and above-average standards in mathematics by age 11. This represents outstanding progress in mathematics and is the result of good, and sometimes excellent, teaching. Pupils make good progress overall. The school is highly committed to providing equality of opportunity and has very good provision both for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and its many pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Its curriculum is outstanding. The quality of care for pupils is high. Parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school.

The school is well led and managed. It judges its own effectiveness well, though sometimes too modestly. The head and other senior staff recognise that the good and outstanding teaching should be more consistent across the school and that the drive to raise pupils' standards in English is a high priority. The school has emerged well from a period of transition and, under its new leadership, with standards improving, has good capacity to improve further.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Take steps to improve the consistency of teaching in different year groups.
- Continue to improve pupils' ability to express themselves and to read with understanding in order to raise standards generally, and especially in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make very good progress from their very low starting points. Children achieve highly in the Nursery and Reception classes, but standards are below the expected levels when they enter Year 1. The pupils have such a lot of ground to make up in their learning of English so, although progress is good in Years 1 and 2, standards are below average in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make very good progress in Years 3 to 6. Those who had been in the school from the Reception Year achieved average standards in English and science and above-average standards in mathematics in the 2005 national tests. This is outstanding progress. Throughout the school year, new pupils, mostly with very little understanding of English, join different year groups and they generally do not reach average standards, although they make good progress. Many pupils have difficulties in reading with understanding and in using the information in their reading to answer questions in their writing, and in using technical language, for example, in science.

The school's provision for developing the English skills of pupils who speak English as an additional language is outstanding and this underpins their good progress across the school. Similarly, the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good; they are well known to all staff, and given every opportunity to achieve. The school successfully enables all groups of pupils to achieve well.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils are cheerful and courteous, behave well in lessons and at play, and have good attitudes to learning. They are kind to each other and feel safe and secure in the school. In discussion with inspectors, they agreed that there is little bullying and that, in the rare instances it occurs, the school deals with it quickly and effectively. They like the 'worry boxes' which enable them to make their concerns known and are pleased that their suggestions, for example, for drinking fountains, are accepted by the school. Attendance is above average.

The school's programmes of personal, health and social education promote pupils' good attitudes effectively. They understand the need for healthy eating and exercise and enjoy the 'Wake up and Shake up' sessions in the school. They appreciate responsibility and have a good awareness of the needs of others because of their charity work. They have a good early understanding of how to achieve economic well-being, for example, by working with local companies and by being given opportunities to handle money.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, but inconsistent. Many lessons throughout the school, for example, in Year 6, create exciting learning opportunities and teachers use explanations and questions very well to ensure that pupils are challenged and not a moment is lost. As a result, pupils are excited, respond very well to opportunities to solve problems by interacting and sharing ideas, and become increasingly confident learners. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 6, pupils were writing with imagination and insight, with one pupil describing the ground as having 'deep, springy moss'. Similarly, in the Reception classes, enthusiastic teaching, with careful attention to language development, enabled the children to make very good progress. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, teachers are not as successful at capturing pupils' attention and the pace of learning slows. This happened in a couple of lessons in Years 3 and 5.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers plan a wealth of practical activities which encourage children to use all of their senses to learn. Staff are very supportive and caring so that the children, who start with very limited skills, blossom, and are soon excitedly calling out 'look, look', when staff introduce them to something new.

Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Support staff and specialist staff provide very effective support to those pupils who have recently started in the school not speaking English, and to those who have learning needs. Great emphasis is placed on giving pupils' first-hand experiences and enabling them to learn in a wide range of ways. As a result, they make good progress in developing their basic skills.

Teachers assess pupils' work very effectively and the information gained is used to improve the way that lessons are organised, to tell pupils how well they are doing and to advise them how to improve. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly skilled at checking on their own progress and managing their own learning. Throughout the school the teachers are very well supported by teaching assistants.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. It is adapted exceptionally well to meet both the specific and varied needs of all pupils. The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes is a particular strength, helping to capture the children's imaginations and developing their basic skills very effectively. Nurture groups and a wide range of additional, specialised activities provide highly effective support to pupils with additional learning needs or physical disabilities, those new to speaking English and those with special talents. As a result, all pupils are highly valued members of the school community. Interesting and meaningful links have been made between subjects, with a strong emphasis on enabling pupils to practise and develop their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. An outstanding feature is the way the school has adapted ICT programs to support learning in other subjects.

An exceptional range of additional activities is provided and these are highly popular with pupils. There is a strong focus on sports, personal, social, health and citizenship education, and introductory French. Pupils' experiences are broadened very well so that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, becoming confident and responsible young citizens.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for its pupils is outstanding and contributes very effectively to their very good achievement. Arrangements for child protection are exemplary and all pupils

are well known to adults so that any concerns are dealt with quickly. Very good relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, help pupils to feel safe and secure. Very effective personal support and guidance underpin all pupils' progress. The school site is very secure and pupils are very aware of the need to keep safe. Safety checks are carried out and recorded regularly. The parents greatly appreciate the level of care the school provides.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding features. The leaders and managers have a very good understanding of the school's effectiveness. A key strength is the delegation of responsibility to a broadly-based management team, and this has helped to ensure good improvement. There is an excellent commitment to include all pupils in everything the school offers and comprehensive systems for supporting pupils' learning. The school has been effectively led by the deputy for the last five terms and has continued to improve. The new headteacher and the senior staff are clearly focused on raising standards, especially in writing, where initiatives have been successful, but the school is aware that this area is an on-going priority. The head has interesting new ideas for taking the school forward. There is an impressive unity of purpose in the school, with all adults passionately committed to help all pupils to reach their potential. The quality of teaching is monitored rigorously to help teachers to achieve this.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are effective in their role as critical friends and are alert to the need for the school to deploy its resources to the benefit of all pupils.

Effective leadership and management have enabled the school to improve well since its last inspection. Attendance has improved and purposeful teaching is raising standards well. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Grade: 2

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 October 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us into your school, being so helpful and courteous to us, and talking to us about your work and your life in the school. We think that your school does many things well:

you are cared for outstandingly well by all adults who work in the school

good teaching helps you to make good and, sometimes, outstanding progress, and teachers work very hard to make your learning interesting

all of you are treated equally and valued for what you can do

you all feel safe and secure in the school and enjoy very good relationships

you know that it is important to exercise and to eat healthy food

the school does especially well for those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes, and the school is very good at helping you all to learn English and in supporting your learning

your headteacher and teachers have good ideas for the school's future.

All these things mean that you develop into confident young people, happy to say what you think in class and in assemblies.

We think that two things would improve your school further:

the school should try to make all your lessons as interesting as the many good ones

the school should help you further with your English so that you read with more understanding and improve your writing.

We very much enjoyed our two days in your school and wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Mr A J Dobell (Lead Inspector)