



Victoria Park Primary

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103940
LEA Sandwell
Inspection number 277030
Inspection dates 24 November 2005 to 25 November 2005
Reporting inspector Linda Rockey HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ballot Street
School category	Community		Smethwick
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands B66 3HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 5588701
Number on roll	519	Fax number	0121 5555077
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ashley Savell-Boss
Date of previous inspection	23 November 1998	Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Brotherton

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Introduction

This was a single inspection event carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), an Additional Inspector (AI) and a Child Care Inspector (CCI).

Description of the school

Victoria Park is a large primary school with a Nursery. It serves a disadvantaged area in Smethwick. Over half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, a third having Pakistani backgrounds. The school has a high number of bilingual learners and about 5% of these are at an early stage of learning English. When children start in the Nursery, their knowledge and skills are well below that expected for children of this age. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is about the same as found nationally. A small number of children are in the care of the local authority. The school provides before and after school care for those children who need it.

The school has not been inspected before. In 2002, Parkside Junior School joined with Corbett Infant School to form Victoria Park Primary. Recent building works were completed in September 2005 to provide accommodation for all the children on one site. The headteacher was absent during the inspection and the acting headteacher is being supported by a consultant headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school acknowledges that it provides an inadequate education for the children and the inspection team agrees. Standards in English, mathematics and science are low. The school has failed to deal with its long-standing weaknesses. The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate and consequently it does not give value for money.

Children make steady progress in the Nursery and Reception classes where teaching is sound. However, children do not make enough progress as they move through the school and their achievement and standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 are inadequate. Over the past four years, standards in Year 6 have fallen. Although the acting headteacher has recognised that achievement and standards are too low, not enough has been done to bring about the necessary improvements.

The quality of teaching is too variable and much of it is not good enough. Systems in place to track children's progress have not been used effectively enough to tackle significant underachievement. This is a major weakness and contributes to why the school has been ineffective in arresting the steady decline in standards.

The personal development and well-being of the children are satisfactory although attendance is not good enough. Children usually behave well and are polite and considerate to visitors. Children are generally looked after effectively but procedures for safety on school visits are not good enough.

The leadership and management are inadequate. Insufficient attention has been focused on tackling low standards and bringing about improvement. The governors have an inadequate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school does not demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and tackle underachievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that expectations are high for all children.
- Establish an effective leadership team to drive forward significant improvement.
- Put into place a whole school teaching and learning policy to bring about consistent, high quality teaching across the school.
- Organise and carry out a rigorous whole school programme of monitoring, evaluation and review.
- Improve attendance and make sure parents are aware of the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children do not make enough progress during their time at school. They get off to a sound start in the Foundation Stage, the majority making satisfactory progress. In some areas of mathematics children make very good progress and reach the standards expected of their age. In reading and writing about half of the children do very well to reach the level expected.

Children underachieve in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average and test results show that they have dropped again this year. The downward trend continues to the end of Year 6 where standards in English, mathematics and science are exceptionally low. Children's progress has declined since 2003 in English, mathematics and science. The children who achieved average and above average results in Year 2 tests have not made the expected progress by the end of Year 6. The children currently in Year 6 are unlikely to reach the targets the school set for them in the national tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Children enjoy school and this view is confirmed by the parents. There is a family atmosphere and children are polite, show consideration for one another and relate easily with adults. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies are used well to promote special events, although there is not always an act of collective worship. Children in the Foundation Stage are well behaved and develop as good independent learners. Attitudes and behaviour in Key Stages 1 and 2 are satisfactory overall but, when insufficiently challenged, too many children do not concentrate on their work and start to disrupt others. In the playground, children are boisterous but usually behave well. Some expressed concern about bullying. Such issues and any racist incidents are dealt with satisfactorily and written records are kept. The school has a system of house captains and they play a useful role in monitoring behaviour in the playground.

Children are encouraged to look after themselves and many choose to have a healthy school lunch or take advantage of the school's breakfast club. Nevertheless, the range of foods on sale at morning break is generally unhealthy, being predominantly sugary foods and crisps. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The school does not rigorously follow up absence or communicate with parents about the importance of their children attending every day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Overall, the quality of teaching is inadequate even though some positive features were seen during the inspection. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are clear about what they want children to learn. Children are engaged in interesting and exciting activities which encourage them to do their best. Such activities are well matched to the children's needs and provide just enough challenge to motivate and push their learning on. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support children who speak English as an additional language and those who find the work hard.

Children in Key Stages 1 and 2 do not do as well as they should because too much teaching is unsatisfactory. The less effective teaching is too slow and fails to provide sufficient challenge to move children's learning on. This leads to restlessness; children lose concentration and mess around. Activities are undemanding and dull. Teachers do not assess children's learning well enough or have a sufficiently clear understanding of what children already know and can do. Too often they set work that is too easy. Their marking of work generally does not help children to see how they might do better. In too many lessons there is insufficient opportunity for children to be creative or work independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate overall. In the Foundation Stage, children are able to learn through exploration. They enthusiastically choose from a range of exciting and well planned activities which enable them to develop basic skills and a love of learning. However, this is not built on in the rest of the school. There is a lack of stimulating and motivating experiences to engage the children's interests. Children of all abilities are not given sufficient challenge to extend their learning. There is no clear plan of how children will develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across different subjects. There are no enriching after-school activities but a small number of children participate in a range of lunchtime activities including aerobics and reading. In addition, children in Years 4 and 5 have visited a local secondary school this term to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

The care, guidance and support of children are unsatisfactory. The children are generally looked after well in school but procedures for safety on school visits are not good enough. The Intensive Support Programme (ISP) has helped the school to establish a system to give children targets but it is not used effectively or implemented consistently across the school.

The plans written to support children who have learning difficulties do not provide sufficiently clear guidance to help these children with the next steps in their learning. Targets are not precise enough and the progress of these children is not monitored systematically by the school. Outside agencies are used effectively to support a few of these children. The support provided for the small number of children who have physical disabilities, including visual impairment, is generally satisfactory. The school's arrangements for protecting children who are vulnerable are sound.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate but the school thinks they are better than this. Despite recognising the need to improve standards, the leadership is only now beginning to take action to rectify the legacy of underachievement. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its work are not thorough enough.

The school has been through a difficult time over the past year and the absence of a stable leadership team has inhibited the school's progress. However, the acting headteacher has successfully managed the building programme and overseen the school's move from two buildings into one. She has ensured that the school runs smoothly from day to day and the majority of the parents are positive about the way the school cares for their children.

The new consultant headteacher has produced a programme outlining activities to address the need for strategic leadership, higher standards and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Together with the acting headteacher, she has written a school improvement plan which identifies the key factors to address in order to raise standards and achievement. However, it is too early to judge whether this will bring about the rapid improvements needed to raise standards in the school.

The governors are supportive but have an inadequate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. At this time, the school has not demonstrated the capacity to improve.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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	No
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	No
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	No
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	No
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	No
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

Victoria Park Primary School Ballot Street Smethwick West Midlands B66 3HH

December 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited Victoria Park Primary School. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. These are the things we liked about your school.

- We thought you were friendly and helpful and have good relationships with all the adults.
- You were polite and courteous. We especially liked the way many of you held the doors open for us when we walked around your school.

We think your school could be much better. We have told the school this and explained it has five areas to improve.

These are to:

- help you to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science
- make better plans for improving the school
- make sure you are all taught well
- check more carefully how well you are doing
- ensure that all of you attend school every day.

There will be some more inspectors who will visit your school regularly to see how you are getting on. I am sure you will work hard and do your best every day to help the school to improve.

Yours faithfully

Linda Rockey Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools