



# Balsall Common Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104059  
**LEA** Solihull  
**Inspection number** 277059  
**Inspection dates** 14 March 2006 to 15 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Tony Dobell AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Balsall Street East
<b>School category</b>	Community		Coventry
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		West Midlands CV7 7FS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01676 532254
<b>Number on roll</b>	674	<b>Fax number</b>	01676 533314
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Richard Hubbard
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Trevor Davies

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 14 March 2006 - 15 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277059
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Balsall Common is a very large primary school serving an area on the south- eastern outskirts of Solihull. Most pupils come from white, western-European backgrounds but an above average proportion comes from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportions of pupils speaking English as an additional language, known to be eligible for free school meals and having learning difficulties are below average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school which gives excellent value for money. Innovative and imaginative leadership by the headteacher and his senior colleagues ensures that the school is always seeking to improve and benefit from new developments, for example in information and communication technology (ICT). The headteacher involves all staff, encouraging them to develop their skills and to introduce new elements into the school's provision, for example, French in Years 3 to 6. Throughout the school, enthusiastic and committed teachers ensure that pupils benefit from a rich, varied and wide-ranging curriculum. As a result, standards are exceptionally high and pupils make outstanding progress although standards in writing dipped slightly in 2005 in the national tests. Children benefit from an excellent start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because they feel valued for what they can offer. Exciting and challenging teaching ensures that they thoroughly enjoy their learning.

The school evaluates its performance well but inspectors believe, in some instances, too modestly, as it judges its overall effectiveness to be good. The school has improved very well since its last inspection because all staff are continually striving to make it even better. It has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Pursue the priorities identified in the school improvement plan with regard to raising standards in writing, and seek excellence across the full range of the school's activities.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are significantly above average throughout the school and pupils make excellent progress. Children's levels of understanding and learning skills when they enter the Nursery cover a wide range, but are slightly above average overall. They make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage because their learning is sensitively and subtly managed so that there is a very well judged balance of activities initiated by children and those led by teachers. Pupils continue to make outstanding progress in Years 1 to 6 because, throughout the school, teachers set challenging targets for groups at different stages of learning. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, together with the few who speak English as an additional language, are given learning activities that are very well planned to build on their previous levels of attainment. The school consistently attains standards that are significantly above average in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. In 2005, although standards in mathematics and science were exceptionally high, those in English dipped slightly. The school has carefully analysed the reasons for this and introduced initiatives which have already improved standards. Pupils now appreciate the need to use the full range of their writing skills in different types of writing. Assessment records show that standards in English at the end of Year 6 and in writing

at the end of Year 2 are on course to be significantly higher in 2006 than they were in 2005.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. They constantly say how much they enjoy the school's exceptionally rich curriculum and their parents overwhelmingly agree. Pupils thrive and flourish in the school. They develop very high levels of self-confidence because of the excellent relationships they enjoy with adults and each other. They are highly motivated by the many innovative approaches used by the school to support and develop learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Behaviour is exemplary and bullying virtually unknown. Attendance rates are very high, including attendance at the vast range of clubs at lunchtime and after school.

Pupils know how to keep safe and understand the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. They enjoy an exceptionally wide range of physical activities, which include golf and skiing! Through the many opportunities offered them, they develop excellent skills of citizenship and show great initiative in organising their own fund-raising on behalf of various charities and contributing in many ways to the wider community. They are very well prepared for the next phase of their education and for their later lives. The long established and very effective school council has initiated many improvements and developments, for example, improvements to midday play facilities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good. This is the main reason why standards are so high. Most lessons have real flair and are outstanding because high levels of challenge for different groups and skilful support result in high achievement. Outstanding teaching in the Nursery lays secure foundations for future learning.

Lessons are very well planned and make meaningful links between different subjects. Teachers are effective in meeting pupils' needs and skilfully use different teaching strategies to help different groups of pupils to make rapid progress. Teachers make excellent use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards in lessons so that pupils' interest is quickly captured and they work with sustained concentration. The teaching and use of ICT are major strengths, helping pupils to reach very high standards. Lessons move at a fast pace and learning is exciting. Very skilful teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties who work hard and achieve as well as their classmates.

The ways in which teachers assess pupils' work, monitor their progress and set targets for further progress are outstanding. Pupils and parents are closely involved so that high aspirations are shared. As one pupil said, 'I'm level 4C in writing but my mum thinks I'm 4B'. This is an example of pupils' keen awareness of their current standards and of how they can improve further.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. In every subject and for every pupil it is quite exceptional. This is reflected in the excellent quality of the huge range of well displayed work in every subject lining the corridors and adorning classrooms throughout the school.

Pupils enthuse about the range of games, sports and activities, from water polo in their own pool to Latin and digital photography. They attain exceptionally high standards in swimming. They eat Tudor food and make their own 'Toy Museum'. They work together on exciting research projects and go down a Victorian coalmine. They hear from other pupils what it is to worship at a Hindu shrine. They control model railways and set up their own radio station. They learn French in Years 3 to 6, perform in plays and orchestras, play in bands, and win just about every competition or event that they enter.

The school successfully develops the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and particularly writing, by weaving them into and across every subject area to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The school's major strength is developing an enthusiasm for learning in all its pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school and form trusting relationships with adults and with each other. Very thorough tracking systems in all subjects enable the school to have a very clear idea of how pupils are achieving and to put in appropriate support if required.

The school's excellent knowledge of pupils' individual needs enables staff to provide sharply targeted and sensitive support. This ensures that every development in a pupil's school life is carefully planned and evaluated and new pupils settle in quickly and confidently.

Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported and make rapid progress because of highly relevant and individual targets. Bilingual pupils receive very effective specialist support and make excellent progress.

Arrangements for child protection are rigorously implemented and links with relevant external agencies are very effective.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is to enable all pupils to reach their potential in a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. A continuing determination to add further strengths to the school's provision ensures that the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement. Pupils learn in a challenging environment which sensitively supports their personal and academic progress. They and their parents appreciate this excellent leadership and are rightly proud of their school.

The headteacher acknowledges that he is supported by a talented and effective team of teachers. He and his deputy complement each other well and, together with the other members of the senior management team, ensure that all adults in the school are given opportunities to develop their strengths and to contribute to and extend the school's successes. The school monitors its effectiveness carefully and systematically, sets challenging targets, and plans rigorously to achieve them. The management of different aspects of the school's provision, for example, the Foundation Stage and pupils with learning difficulties, is highly effective. Governors are an important part of the team. They effectively hold the school to account to ensure that it continues to seek excellence in all its activities. A number are in school regularly and so have a clear appreciation of the quality of the school's work. They ensure that the school uses its resources effectively for the benefit of all pupils. The school consults parents regularly and takes their views into account in its future planning. The community values the school for its successes and its continuing improvement.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Thank you for welcoming us into your school, being so friendly and polite to us, and talking to us about your learning and your lives in the school. We think that your school is outstanding in many ways.

- You work hard, make excellent progress, and reach very high standards
- Your teachers work very hard to make your learning interesting and exciting so that you enjoy challenging lessons and the many activities provided for you
- You are all treated equally and valued for what you can do
- Relationships are excellent, you support each other very well, and are rarely absent
- You are cared for very well by all adults in the school and you feel confident and happy
- You know that it is important to exercise and to eat healthy food
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are super school leaders and are always looking for ways to make your school even better.

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

We think that your school would be even better if it helped you to improve your writing further.

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