



Palfrey Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104160
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277087
Inspection dates 23 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Walsh AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Milton Street
School category	Community		Walsall
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		West Midlands WS1 4LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 721092
Number on roll	326	Fax number	01922 641729
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Robert Poyser

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large junior school is situated in a area of socio-economic deprivation and serves a predominantly Asian community in Walsall. The majority of pupils are from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds. The remaining pupils are from a wide range of other heritages. Very few pupils speak English at home and many pupils are not fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry is below that typically found for seven-year-olds. The school has been awarded a gold Activemark and a gold Artsmark for its work in sports and the arts.

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 particular strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, curriculum enrichment and standards of care. The school's own self-evaluation is more modest as it recognises that there are further improvements to be made. Pupils are achieving well. They start school with below average standards and many are not fluent English speakers. Pupils make good progress, reaching average standards in English by the end of Year 6. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Standards in mathematics and science are below average. Achievement in mathematics has improved, resulting in good progress by pupils in Years 5 and 6. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' progress in mathematics is no better than satisfactory because work is not consistently well matched to their needs. Consequently, the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning and respond well to the good teaching. There is a wonderful atmosphere of racial harmony. The curriculum offers pupils an extensive range of very enjoyable experiences that contribute well to their progress. Pupils are very well looked after. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough and this slows their progress. There are improved systems for tracking pupils' progress, but information is not always used effectively enough to ensure that the most able pupils are set challenging work. Good leadership and management have secured good improvement since the previous inspection. Extensive monitoring and evaluation have resulted in the school knowing itself well but there is not always enough focus on pupils' individual learning needs. Effective strategies for raising standards and sensible plans for further developments demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in mathematics further by ensuring work is consistently matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the more able in Years 3 and 4.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation to provide a greater focus on pupils' individual learning needs, especially the needs of the more able.
- Monitor attendance with greater rigour and take more effective steps to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They often start school with low levels of skills and knowledge and limited English. Pupils make good progress and they reach average standards in English by the end of Year 6. Standards have gradually improved over the last few years, as a result of good quality teaching that incorporates many opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills, and a rich curriculum that extends pupils' experiences. Boys and girls from minority ethnic

backgrounds achieve equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because of good quality support.

Standards in mathematics and science are below average, as shown by last year's test results. In mathematics, the school has worked hard to rectify this problem by raising expectations and improving assessment. This has increased the rate of pupils' progress. Progress is now satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, and good in Years 5 and 6. Progress is uneven because work is not always accurately matched to pupils' needs and presentation is sometimes careless. In science, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level is improving. Pupils' increased understanding of the English language assists their achievement in mathematics and science but they still struggle with problem solving and precise scientific language. The school has set challenging targets in English, mathematics and science but recent assessment information indicates a shortfall in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils bring from their Islamic faith a strong sense of spirituality and a clear moral code that is further developed in school. Originality and creativity are encouraged so that pupils develop a strong appreciation of art and the world around them. Pupils form excellent relationships with each other and work well together in lessons. Pupils behave very sensibly both in and out of lessons. There is a very calm atmosphere of racial harmony and mutual respect. Pupils learn to value their own cultures and are developing a better understanding of traditional British culture.

Pupils enjoy school very much. They are very keen to learn and are often bubbling over with enthusiasm. However, occasionally they get too excited, calling out answers and forgetting to listen to each other. Attendance is no better than satisfactory because some pupils take too much time off school, and this slows their progress. Some parents condone their children's absences and also continue to take extended holidays during term time.

Pupils respond maturely to opportunities to take responsibility. Through the school council, they are able to make a significant contribution to the school community. For example, pupils say that children who act as 'trouble busters' are good at sorting out squabbles on the playground. Pupils are very aware of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise. They follow safe practices well, especially in practical lessons. Pupils' positive attitudes, combined with improving basic skills, ensure that they are well placed for future success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching enables pupils of different minority ethnic backgrounds to learn successfully and acquire good basic skills. Teachers plan interesting work that motivates and engages pupils. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to explain new ideas. In the best lessons, questions are carefully targeted and challenge pupils to think deeply and formulate clear views to share with others. However, in some otherwise satisfactory lessons, questions are not targeted at particular pupils, resulting in a babble of raised voices and missed opportunities for the teachers to accurately assess individual gains in knowledge and understanding

Teachers' on-going assessment often focuses on making sure that those who have experienced difficulties in a lesson receive the extra help they need. There is scope for better assessment of the progress made by more able learners, so that they can be set more demanding work. The use of learning targets is effectively supporting pupils' next steps in English, but is less in evidence in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' effective learning is underpinned by a good curriculum that is inclusive and innovative and enables pupils to build key skills with confidence. The recent introduction of 'Big Writing' enables pupils to write creatively and at length. The school has rightly identified the next step as making more time for the pupils themselves to review their progress. Work is usefully underway in mathematics to enable pupils to further extend their problem-solving skills. There is outstanding provision for sports, music and arts and a very wide range of interesting trips. A recent Year 5 visit to Llandudno gave many pupils their first experience of the seaside. As one girl said, 'It was amazing to walk in the sand in bare feet.' Visits to schools in different parts of the borough are widening pupils' horizons. Numerous visitors are invited into school to share their experiences, including local artists who work with pupils to produce a wide range of work of outstanding quality.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Every pupil is valued and all adults are committed to promoting pupils' learning and personal well-being. Pupils told inspectors that they are confident to discuss any worries with the staff. Child protection arrangements are secure. The attention to pupils' health and safety is good. The school makes adequate efforts to encourage pupils to attend school, including identifying and supporting the poorest attenders, but some aspects of monitoring lack rigour and not all absences are meticulously pursued.

Sensitive support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning to speak English as a new language. Pupils who join the school part-way through the year and those who return from extended holidays are well supported. This enables them to settle in quickly. Pupils benefit from close assessment of personal needs and are given work that helps them move on. Systems for assessment and target setting have improved but targets for the most able pupils are still not challenging enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has had a central role in developing a very inclusive and supportive ethos in which pupils really enjoy learning and achieve well. The accommodation has been much improved and now provides an attractive, spacious learning environment.

Strategies for shared leadership are successful and result in a highly effective team of senior leaders, teachers and support staff with a united commitment to school improvement. Good self-evaluation allows the school to have an accurate picture of what needs improving. A focus on the teaching of mathematics has improved achievement but the school recognises that further improvements are needed. An extensive monitoring of teaching and analysis of data evaluation has been built upon to improve standards. However, the evaluation of learning is not always crisp enough to ensure that the more able pupils make the best possible progress. Issues from the last inspection have been dealt with well.

The considerable effort made to remove barriers to achievement is very evident in the school's work and ensures that pupils develop fluency in English. Parents value the quality of education offered by the school and also the dedication of the staff, especially that of the headteacher. The school has worked effectively in partnership with parents and community groups to ensure that pupils' personal and academic needs are met. The governing body is supportive, knows the school well and effectively represents the local community. The securing of significant improvement combined with sensible plans for further developments demonstrate the school's capacity to improve. Resources are used well. Prudent financial management secures good value for money.

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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	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school, for being so friendly and talking to us about all the interesting things you do in school. It was a pleasure to meet such hardworking, well-behaved children. We enjoyed admiring your wonderful art work.

Your school is a good school that does many things well. You make good progress because teachers make your lessons interesting and fun. Everyone gets an equal chance to do well. You are doing very well in your English lessons and getting better at mathematics. We know you like the interesting activities that help you learn and exciting trips, like the visit to the seaside. All adults look after you well and you say that you can go to an adult if you have a problem. Kind adults help those of you who find the work hard. You all get on very well. We like the way you show respect to each other. Your headteacher and other teachers are working hard to make your school even better. Your school council is also working hard and we were pleased to hear that you think the 'trouble busters' are doing a good job at playtimes.

We have asked your teachers to make sure all of you do well in mathematics and to make sure that everyone gets work that is hard enough. Some of you can help by taking less time off school.

We are glad that you enjoy school and wish you all the best for the future.