



Palfrey Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104161
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277088
Inspection dates 20 March 2006 to 21 March 2006
Reporting inspector John Eadie AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Bescot Street
School category	Community		Walsall
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		West Midlands WS1 4HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 720713
Number on roll	349	Fax number	01922 720104
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr M Yasin
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Maria Raybould

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant school is situated in a disadvantaged area and serves a predominantly Asian community in Walsall. More than a third of the children are of Pakistani background, about a third Bangladeshi and a quarter Indian. There are very small numbers from a range of other heritages. Very few children speak English at home and most start school with a very limited command of English. The school has satisfied the standards necessary for the Investors in People award.

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. It provides well for the children and gives good value for money. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is more modest, as it recognises that although much work has been done, there are still improvements to be made. Children are making good progress as they start school with little English and low levels of skills and knowledge. Standards are in line with national averages by the time they leave and have improved in the last year as a result of school initiatives. However, standards of spoken English are not progressing as fast as standards in reading and writing and the school needs to 'go the extra mile' to overcome this barrier to progress. Provision in the nursery and reception classes is very good and these children make good progress, although standards reached are still below average by the time children start in Year 1. Progress throughout the school is hampered by the numbers who take extended holidays and some children's persistent lateness.

The progress made is largely due to the school's good leadership and management. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, which is now good. Children's personal development is good due to good levels of care and guidance. There is a rich and varied curriculum, suited well to children's particular needs.

Bearing in mind the good leadership and management, the good progress made since the previous inspection and the very obvious commitment to continuous improvement, the school is well placed to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus more rigorously on developing children's skills in spoken English.
- Work to improve rates of attendance and particularly children's punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well. They start school with low levels of skills and knowledge and make good progress to reach average standards in the national tests in Year 2. Children make a particularly good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. The provision in these classes is very well organised and these children make good progress. By the time they start in Year 1, standards reached are below average overall. Their personal development is the strongest aspect and standards are almost up to the expected levels. Although good progress is made in their language and mathematical development, standards in these areas remain below average. Children continue to make good progress through Years 1 and 2. This is particularly noticeable in their language development, where many children are making exceptional progress in reading, for example. However, their relatively weak skills in spoken English are holding back their overall progress. Challenging targets are set for children's progress and they are on track to meet these targets. The school is particularly careful to ensure that all groups, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make the same progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of children, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, are good. Children know that they and their work are very highly valued and so they grow in self-worth and work hard. Children work and play well together and there is a high level of racial harmony. As a result, children feel safe and equally accepted; they and their parents say they enjoy coming to school. Children talk about their school as 'brilliant'. Attendance figures have improved significantly in recent years and are now average. However, there is still a high number of absences for extended and religious holidays. Also, many children arrive late each morning.

Many children lack confidence and clarity in the way they speak and this holds back their contribution to the school community. They raise money for a number of charities, and increasing opportunities to work with partners and in a group are helping them to learn about living together in the wider community. The relatively weak development of speaking skills is also hindering children's preparation for future life, but this is balanced by the good progress they make with their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children make healthy choices at lunchtime and have a good awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour in lessons and in the school is always good and sometimes outstanding. Children follow routines safely and this helps to create a calm and orderly school. Even so, the behaviour of some children at playtime is boisterous and they are unaware that their actions can sometimes result in minor injuries to themselves or others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and children are learning well. A particular strength of teaching is the way that teachers strive to meet the varying needs of the children in their classes. Children are treated very much as individuals and teachers plan work carefully to meet their needs. Relationships are good and lead to children working hard and wanting to do their best for their teachers. Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to children's learning, particularly for those who do not speak English at home and for those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

In the Nursery class, teaching is often outstanding and all adults make very clear assessments for the thoroughly planned range of activities. This enables them to plan work very effectively to meet the needs of these young children. This good provision continues into the Reception classes, where assessments allow teachers to group children according to their stage of learning. Good assessments are made in Years 1 and 2 to demonstrate children's progress and to help teachers set targets for their future learning. Some of these targets are at an early stage of development. They are

not often used in teachers' marking and children are not always as aware as they might be of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. Attractive displays around the school provide evidence of the interesting activities that the children enjoy. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good, but is not yet good enough to overcome the barrier to learning presented by the children's weak skills in spoken English. A large number of teaching assistants provide effective support for children of all abilities. Fifteen members of staff speak a variety of languages in addition to English. The well-planned use of this support ensures that, by the end of Year 2, most children whose home language is not English are able to cope well. The curriculum is enriched by a number of clubs, visits to places of interest and a good range of visitors. The school's work with 'Young Enterprise' projects promotes the children's self-confidence well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its children. Staff have consistently high expectations of children's behaviour in lessons and they treat them equally and fairly. Relationships and racial harmony are promoted well. Together with well-established routines, this makes for a very orderly and calm environment where children feel comfortable and safe, and secure in asking for help when they need it. Targets in English and mathematics are set and reviewed regularly. However, they are in their early stages and are not yet fully effective in aiding children's progress. Support from parents has been harnessed well, for example through the school's library service which is used very well by families. Even so, the school has not yet managed to get the support of parents in improving attendance and punctuality.

Child protection arrangements are secure and there is a high level of first aid knowledge amongst staff. However, boisterous behaviour in the playground often goes unchecked. Site inspections are regular and risk assessments are thorough. The canteen staff are especially active and effective in promoting healthy eating and related social skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very clear direction to the school; in this, she is ably supported by her deputy and other staff with management responsibilities. However, not all key subject co-ordinators have sufficient opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Together, the school team have enthusiastically taken on board a range of strategies to raise standards, for example the initiative to develop reading. This has had an impact in a significant improvement in the national test scores last year, and the challenge

to the school is now to apply the same rigorous approach to raise standards in children's spoken English.

The school has worked very hard and successfully to forge links with the local community and other schools. These links, and the way the school has used a range of outside expertise, have had a good impact on improving the quality of provision for the children. Parents are consulted regularly. A number of changes have been made as a result of these consultations, for example an increased range of school clubs and changes to the way that children come into school to make it safer. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, saying such things as, 'All staff are helpful and friendly' and, 'The school is a safe and friendly environment.'

Governance is satisfactory. Although governors are very supportive of the school, they are not fully involved in checking on its effectiveness. Finances are managed carefully.

Taking into account the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation in raising standards, the teamwork evident in the school and the support of governors and parents, the school is well placed to continue 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?	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	2	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	3	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	3	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	NA
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 so much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed our time with you and listening to you tell us how much you enjoy your school. You are right to be proud as it is a good school.

Your school does a number of things well:

you are making good progress as your teachers make your lessons interesting and fun

you make a very good start in the nursery and reception classes because the adults in these classes are very good at knowing what you need to learn.

all adults look after you really well

your headteacher and other teachers know clearly how to make your school better

there is a good range of activities to help you to learn, such as visits, visitors and clubs

the teaching assistants are really good at helping you to learn, particularly those of you who do not speak English very well yet.

There are some things that could be better:

although you are making really good progress in your reading, your spoken English is not progressing so well

some of you are not making such good progress as you could, because you are absent too often or are late coming to school.