



Dickens Heath Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133720
LEA Solihull
Inspection number 282344
Inspection dates 5 December 2005 to 6 December 2005
Reporting inspector Alison Cartlidge RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Three Acres Lane Dickens Heath Solihull, West Midlands B90 1NA
School category	Community	Telephone number	0121 7338359
Age range of pupils	3 to 10	Fax number	0121 7338475
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair of governors	CLlr Ken Meeson
Number on roll	181	Headteacher	Mrs Angela Bird
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school was opened in 2002 in a newly built village on the outskirts of Solihull. It has grown rapidly and the oldest pupils are now in Year 5. Most pupils are of White British heritage but a significant minority are from Indian and mixed race backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. A high proportion of pupils enters or leaves the school during the year and there have been many changes of staff in the last three years as the school has grown in size. The school houses childcare facilities that are inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that has strengths in pupils' personal development. Changes in staffing and the rapid growth of pupil numbers have slowed the rate of school development. Nevertheless, the building blocks for school improvement are in place, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) are good and standards are above average and rising, by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards remain above average. In Year 5, pupils' attainment is below average, although this represents broadly satisfactory progress from the low starting points of some of these pupils. Throughout the school, writing is less well developed than reading and mathematics. Leadership and management are satisfactory, and the newly formed senior management team has a realistic understanding of the school's effectiveness, and is well placed to move the school forward. It evaluates different aspects of the school's work accurately and there are satisfactory plans to increase the rigour in monitoring teaching, learning and standards to increase pupils' progress. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory, not all teachers have high enough expectations for what their pupils should achieve, especially in their writing. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the attainment of pupils in Year 5 by increasing the challenge in the work provided.
- Increase the progress pupils make in writing by providing more extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their skills.
- Use assessment information more rigorously to set challenging targets and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Monitor teaching more effectively to iron out inconsistencies in practice, especially in marking and using assessment to plan future learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the school is above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There are no significant differences in the progress made by pupils from different backgrounds and starting points. Pupils make a good start to their learning in the Nursery and make good progress up to the end of the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception Year, most pupils are exceeding the expected goals for their age in all areas of learning and develop a wide range of skills. In Years 1 to 5, pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards are consistently above average by the end of Year 2, and are rising. In other year groups, standards are above average, with the exception of the small group of pupils in Year 5, where attainment is below average. This year group joined the school in Year 2, and their national test results at the end of this year were low. In addition, there have been many new pupils joining this class, which has slowed their learning. Throughout the school, pupils' writing is satisfactory but less well developed than reading and mathematics because teachers do not expect

pupils to improve their writing quickly enough. Suitably challenging targets for pupils are set and achieved by the end of Year 2, but the targets set for pupils in Years 3 to 5 are not always high enough, making the progress of some pupils slower than it should be.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The climate for learning is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A strong emphasis on improving social skills enables most pupils to work together well. Relationships are mostly very positive and the few older pupils who find it difficult to work and play together receive good support.

Pupils of all ages respond well to positions of trust, and carry out a range of tasks effectively. Class councils provide good opportunities for teachers to listen carefully to what pupils have to say, and pupils are starting to have a stronger voice in the school. Although the school is the centre of much community activity, the village is still developing, which restricts the contribution the pupils can make to the wider community.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance and behaviour. Pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 have particularly positive attitudes to learning, which support their better progress. Some older pupils have low levels of concentration and become restless quickly. Pupils feel safe and develop a thorough understanding of healthy lifestyles. This includes daily exercise that ensures that they are fit and healthy for learning. Pupils develop good skills in reading and numeracy to support them in the next stage of education and in the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and are good in the Foundation Stage. In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers plan a wide range of stimulating practical activities that engages the pupils' interest well and encourages them to work sensibly in small groups and on their own. Lessons are planned around a shared theme and good use is made of visits to develop interest in a topic. For example, a recent visit to a farm stable set the scene for the pupils to learn about the Christmas nativity.

Teachers throughout the school have good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well. Lessons often start well, with teachers showing good subject knowledge and asking questions to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) is often used well at these times. For example, in Year 4, the teacher used video clips of pupils' mini dramas to help them to reflect on their work. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the pupils when they are writing independently. Marking is not used consistently to help pupils to improve their writing and some teachers praise pupils for work that should

be better. In some lessons, not enough use is made of assessment information to plan work that meets pupils' differing needs sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with a good curriculum in the Foundation Stage. The well-designed activities in the Nursery and Reception classes provide pupils with good experiences and ensure a positive start to their education. The school provides a good range of interesting visits and events for younger pupils. The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 is well established, with a solid emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is developing well in Years 3 to 5, with good provision for pupils' personal development. There are satisfactory opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and for more able pupils. Visitors, such as drama specialists, are used well to add interest and enjoyment. For example, older pupils enjoyed learning how to act out scenes from *The Wizard of Oz*. The provision for ICT is good and is used well to support learning in other subjects. There is satisfactory education for safety and health. The range of extra-curricular clubs and activities is satisfactory and is developing well. The school building and grounds are particularly attractive and well designed, and are used effectively to support learning in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Pupils in the Nursery settle quickly because they receive very effective care and support, and induction procedures are good. Throughout the school, members of staff have good relationships with the pupils and are committed to ensuring their welfare. Pupils at risk are identified and given the right kind of support. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive satisfactory support. Some pupils with highly specific needs receive very effective individual support. The review process is thorough and the views of both pupils and parents are taken into account. The school works satisfactorily in partnership with parents, carers and other agencies to support these pupils.

Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly and their progress is tracked. However, the analysis of this information lacks rigour, and pupils who are in danger of underachieving are not identified and supported quickly enough. The systems used for supporting underachieving pupils have had variable success. Some teachers are good at assessing pupils' work and setting clear and challenging targets, but this is not consistent across the school.

The school follows locally agreed procedures for child protection, and vulnerable pupils are monitored satisfactorily. The local education authority has authorised the employment of new members of staff who are still waiting for up-to-date criminal record checks to be completed. There are good levels of supervision and the school generally ensures that pupils are safe and secure. Bullying is usually addressed well, racism is discouraged and respect for all is encouraged successfully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Due to the rapid expansion of the school, there have been several changes in staffing over the last three years as well as an older year group added each year. The headteacher has organised and managed these changes well and the school functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school has established a calm and welcoming atmosphere that is conducive to learning, and senior managers have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards further.

Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and the co-ordinator monitors the provision effectively. The senior management of the school has very recently been enhanced by two new members of staff. They have made a good start in planning for the development of English and mathematics in Years 3 to 5, although they are at the early stages of bringing about the necessary changes. After a period of rapid growth, the school is in a good position to improve, because standards by the end of Year 2 are already improving.

The headteacher knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan identifies appropriate priorities. However, it does not always make clear enough how actions will lead to improved standards. The school has thorough systems for tracking pupils' progress, although data is not used rigorously enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress, especially in Years 3 to 5. The monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficient to ensure that all teachers have equally high expectations of their pupils and use marking to help pupils to improve.

The governing body is supportive and very proud of the school, but is still developing its role as a 'critical friend'. Whilst parents' and pupils' views are sought on a number of aspects of the school's work, the outcome of these consultations has not been explained to the satisfaction of a significant minority of parents. Most parents are pleased with the work of the school. The school has good links with the church and the childcare providers that occupy part of the school building.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	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?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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	No	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

Dickens Heath Primary School Three Acres Lane Dickens Heath Solihull West Midlands B90 1NA

7 December 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly.

What we liked most about your school

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn quickly.
- Members of staff help you to learn to behave sensibly.
- The school helps you to learn about being healthy.
- Your teachers are kind and caring and look after you well.
- Members of staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- Your parents and carers are pleased that you enjoy coming to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help older children to do more challenging work.
- Help you to improve your writing.
- Use information on how well you are doing to set you clear targets.
- The headteacher and governors need to check that all teachers are teaching you well enough and that you learn as quickly as you should.

We thoroughly enjoyed listening to you and watching you learn. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge, Susan Walsh Additional Inspectors