

Dorrington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103195
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286590
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	595
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Gunbs
Headteacher	Loretta Barratt
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2003
School address	Dorrington Road Perry Barr Birmingham B42 1QR
Telephone number	0121 4645330
Fax number	0121 4647904

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dorrington Primary is situated in a residential area in Perry Barr in North Birmingham. It is much larger than most other primary schools. A quarter of pupils are from Indian heritage and the remainder are from other groups, including White British, Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African. The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is above the national average. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is below average. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Status award and the Quality Mark.

Since the previous inspection in 2003, there have been four headteachers or acting headteachers. The current headteacher joined the school as an acting headteacher in November 2007 and she was appointed as the substantive headteacher in March 2008. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2007 and a new assistant headteacher in February 2008. The governing body is in the process of appointing a substantive deputy headteacher. Staffing has now stabilised after two years of very high turnover.

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 and it has some good features. The personal development and well-being of the pupils are good. Their social skills are good, and pupils are welcoming, courteous and kind to each other. Importantly, the pupils feel safe, supported and well cared for. They are proud of their school and are extremely pleased with the recent improvements that have taken place.

The school went through significant staff changes between 2006 and 2007, when almost half of the class teachers in the school, two headteachers and a deputy headteacher resigned. This period of difficulty resulted in pupils making less progress than they should and a relative fall in standards in reading, writing and mathematics. During this time, a number of parents lost confidence in the school and a few parents removed their children. However, parents who responded to the current inspection questionnaire say that the school is now heading in the right direction and recent changes are welcomed. One parent wrote, 'There has been a massive improvement in the school and how my children view it.' The new headteacher has taken appropriate and swift action to accelerate progress and strengthen the quality of teaching. She has established a team where all staff are determined to ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable. In partnership with the acting deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, she has introduced an effective system for tracking the progress of individual pupils and identifying those who need additional support to achieve their challenging targets. These recent actions have had a positive impact. Current assessment information shows pupils in all year groups are now making satisfactory progress and some are beginning to make good progress. Standards are steadily rising, with more pupils working at the expected level for their age. Nevertheless, the school is aware that whilst standards remain broadly average, they are not as high as have they have been in previous years.

Teaching is satisfactory, with an increasing proportion that is good. Pupils make good progress when teachers use assessment information to set work that matches the different learning needs of pupils and offers an appropriate level of challenge. However, this successful practice is not consistent throughout school. Too often, assessment information is not used effectively enough, resulting in pupils of different abilities being offered a similar task. In particular, the more able pupils are often set work that is too easy and on occasions, they work independently for too long and teachers miss the opportunity to ask them challenging questions and extend their learning. Consequently, they make satisfactory rather than good progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers' marking is positive, but it does not provide pupils with the specific guidance they need to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. The school is in the process of introducing a more creative approach to the curriculum that will give pupils the chance to apply their literacy and mathematical skills in a range of situations.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is good. She has been instrumental in ensuring the school has moved forward following a difficult period. The acting deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher provide her with valuable support. They work effectively with the headteacher to monitor the work of the school and ensure they identify the right priorities for improvement. The role of middle managers is developing satisfactorily. Governors are supportive, but are aware that they are not yet fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and evaluating the impact of actions identified in the school improvement plan. Self-evaluation is accurate and leading to improvement in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, and this shows that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle very quickly into the nursery because of good parental support and effective induction and transition procedures. Children enter the Foundation Stage with performance levels that are in line with those expected. Although there are some relative weaknesses in language and numeracy skills, children make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with levels of attainment that broadly match those expected for their age. Children make good gains in their personal, social and emotional development because staff encourage them to cooperate and respect others. The curriculum is currently being reviewed so that a greater emphasis is placed on learning language and mathematical skills through creative activities. Staff carefully monitor the progress of children and use this information to plan a range of purposeful and practical activities. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Occasionally, staff set tasks for the more able children that do not always provide them with an appropriate level of challenge. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory, although there are currently insufficient opportunities to monitor teaching.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, particularly by ensuring pupils are suitably challenged.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about how they can improve their work through effective marking in all subjects.
- Ensure governors are more fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and evaluating the impact of actions identified in the school improvement plan.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Current assessment information shows that pupils in all year groups, including those who need extra help with their learning, those who speak English as an additional language and the more able, are making satisfactory progress. In the 2007 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, pupils reached broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Results at the end of Year 6 were also broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Attainment in the current Year 6 is lower than in 2007. Performance data shows that, although these pupils have made progress since November 2007, this dip in attainment is due to the high turnover of teaching staff in recent years and a high mobility rate in this year group. Assessment data and inspection evidence show that standards are set to rise again in 2009.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'You can visibly see the enthusiasm and confidence in the children because they feel involved in being part of the school,' commented one parent. The strong personal development of pupils

is a major strength of this happy school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and exclusions are minimal. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe. A school councillor said, 'We all try to support each other.' This greatly adds to pupils' enjoyment of work and activities. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils is very effective. Social and moral education matures the pupils ahead of their years. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities and participate in all aspects of school including physical activities, clubs and healthy eating. Cultural education is widening through a more creative curriculum, and the backgrounds of minority ethnic pupils are regularly celebrated. Although the school's attendance and punctuality have declined, its present determined efforts are producing attendance and punctuality closer to national expectations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved as a result of the planning and lesson structure recently introduced. This ensures that all teachers make the learning objectives clear at the beginning of a lesson and constantly check pupils' understanding against the success criteria, both during and at the end of each lesson. Pupils achieve well when teachers give clear explanations at the start of the lesson, demonstrate the strategies pupils will need to use to complete the task, and ask questions that challenge their thinking. Pupils enjoy discussing their work with a partner, but are not always given this opportunity during lessons. Although staff have detailed assessment information about the pupils, they do not always use this to set tasks that challenge all groups of pupils. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide a key role in providing pupils with support, both in class and in targeted sessions beyond lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and generally meets the pupils' needs. There is a suitable focus on literacy and numeracy. Staff are developing the use of information and communication technology to reinforce skills and extend pupils' learning. Although pupils acquire satisfactory writing skills, the opportunities they have to apply these skills in other subjects are sometimes limited because of the overuse of worksheets. The school is aware of this and it is reviewing the curriculum so that there are greater links between subjects and it is more creative and relevant for the pupils. There are a wide variety of visits and visitors to supplement the curriculum. Links to the community are made through sports and music. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' work. There are opportunities for all the children to take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including cookery, Japanese, sports and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good levels of care and support for pupils help them to feel safe and valued members of the school community. Child protection, health and safety and security procedures comply with expectations. The learning difficulties coordinator has recently introduced a system to track the progress of pupils with LDD. As a result, they now receive support that better meets their individual needs and their progress is beginning to accelerate. The quality of academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers' marking provides pupils with encouragement but does not give pupils

the advice they need to improve their work. Staff are in the process of introducing new ways of sharing targets with pupils so that pupils can take more responsibility for their progress. The school is successfully increasing communication with parents and developing greater partnerships with the community it serves, both inside and outside school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following a period of change, staff are working together well to improve pupils' achievement. They have responded positively to the recent changes in the school and this has significantly contributed to improvements in the quality of provision. The headteacher has introduced a range of good initiatives that are accelerating progress. The senior leadership team has been recently strengthened with the appointment of middle leaders who are developing their roles well and beginning to provide staff with the support they need to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Governors are enthusiastic and provide satisfactory support. Through regular discussions with school staff and meetings with parents, they keep a watchful eye on the school's progress. Nevertheless, they are aware that they are not yet fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Dorrington Primary School, Birmingham B42 1QR

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, visiting your lessons and looking at your work. We would also like to say a special thank you to the children on the school council who came to talk to us.

We decided that Dorrington Primary is a satisfactory school with some aspects that are good. We were particularly pleased to see how much your work has improved during the past six months, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

This is what we liked most about your school.

- You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good.
- Your teachers and other adults look after you well. They take good care of you and encourage you to eat healthily and keep fit.
- Mrs Barratt is leading the school effectively and, together with the teachers and other adults, she is determined to improve your school.
- You enjoy school and like the different clubs, for example cookery and learning Japanese.
- You are keen and eager to learn and are only too ready to take on jobs and responsibilities.

To make your school even better, we have asked Mrs Barratt and the staff to help you make even faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics. We have also asked your teachers to challenge all of you to do your best, especially those of you who are capable of harder work, and to mark your work carefully so that you know what you need to do to improve. You can help by working hard to meet your targets. We have also asked the governors to help the school more by checking how well it is doing and making sure that everything is always as good as it can be.

Thank you once again to all the adults that work with you, the governors, the office staff and you for making us feel so welcome. It was a pleasure to meet you. We wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

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