

Allens Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103243
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286603
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eleanor Smith
Headteacher	Johanne Clifton
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2001
School address	Allens Croft Road Kings Heath Birmingham B14 6RP
Telephone number	0121 6752611
Fax number	0121 6752822

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children's attainment is very low when they start school, exceptionally so in language and literacy. Numbers entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are both well above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those for whom English is an additional language, has increased recently and is now higher than in other schools. The school had a new headteacher in January 2006 and a new deputy headteacher in September 2006. It moved into a new building in February 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This improving school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Achievement is satisfactory but it is getting better. Standards are below average in Year 6. Last year, they were well below average in mathematics, continuing a downward trend in that subject. Good leadership and management have begun to halt this decline and have also improved progress in writing. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress this year in both areas. However, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical learning in practical investigations or in other subjects. This causes the uneven progress seen in different year groups. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage. Here standards are below average but children make good progress. The satisfactory curriculum promotes literacy skills well in all subjects but not mathematical skills. It is under review to address this and to ensure it fully meets all pupils' needs.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It too is improving because it is rigorously checked and staff understand what makes a good lesson. However, there are still inconsistencies in some classes that mean pupils' work is occasionally not at the right level or is confusing for them. Nevertheless, using their own word, the staff's 'passion' to help each pupil to do their best is very evident. It is supported well by the school's excellent links with external agencies, including the adjacent Children's Centre. These links have resulted in outstanding care, guidance and support for the pupils and, where relevant, their families. The effective, supportive learning environment arising from all of this contributes greatly to the pupils' good personal development. Pupils enjoy school, their attendance has improved and they have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, which they proudly put into practice, including in their packed lunches.

The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. Having identified the right priorities for improvement, it is tackling them well. The headteacher, with good support from governors and the senior leadership team, keeps everyone focused on raising achievement. The strong teamwork arising from this gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics, providing more opportunities for pupils to undertake practical investigations and to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Achieve consistency in the quality of teaching so that all pupils have every opportunity to make the best possible progress at all times. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage but, because of their low attainment on entry, few are on course to reach the nationally expected standards by the end of Reception. Achievement is satisfactory in the rest of the school. It is improving because the actions taken by leaders and managers have led to some good progress in writing and mathematics in some year groups since last September. The good progress is not yet consistent across the school, especially in mathematics. Pupils use their writing skills well in other subjects. They are beginning to write at length with clear purpose and sense of audience in most year groups. However, they

do not often enough use and apply their mathematical skills in investigative work or in other subjects and this limits their progress.

Standards are below average in Year 6 but they too are improving. Several changes in the population in that year group led to the dip in 2006 and caused a blip in the otherwise rising trend for this age group. Standards are well below average in Year 2 but pupils' progress is satisfactory. Writing was the weakest area in this age group last year. The school sets itself challenging targets and works hard to reach them. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make sound progress towards their targets, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From the time they start school in the Foundation Stage, most children successfully learn to care for others and to share, co-operate and take turns. Pupils enjoy school. Their attendance has greatly improved in the past year and is now average.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of identity, for example, describing their sense of loss on leaving the old school yet clearly proud to be in the new one. They readily accept responsibility and they behave well. They do not as readily show initiative or independence. Plans are in place to foster these qualities better but, for example, staff rather than pupils currently initiate ideas for the school council to explore.

Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils know they are all equally valued and that staff will always help them. They particularly appreciate the way circle time and the use of 'feelings boxes' contribute to this. Pupils confidently share their different cultural backgrounds and develop good levels of respect for each other. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community and, with their sound progress in basic skills; they are satisfactorily prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The strong emphasis placed on practical work and building independent skills in the Foundation Stage contributes greatly to the children's good progress in that age group. Although satisfactory overall, in other age groups some good teaching was observed during the inspection, which also had these good features. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, encouraging them to listen to and learn from each other. This is improving their progress and personal development.

Teachers plan their lessons well, basing them on the information gained from assessing and tracking pupils' progress, and pupils value the individual targets set for them from this. However, in some lessons, pupils' learning is pitched at the wrong level, occasionally even expecting too much of them. This and the fact that targets are better focused in English than in mathematics, causes progress to be inconsistent.

Support staff are used effectively to help pupils who find learning difficult, for whatever reason, to reach their targets. Teachers' written marking is supportive and often evaluates pupils' progress in relation to their targets. It does this better in writing than in mathematics because pupils' writing targets are sharper and more focused than their targets for mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The broad, imaginative and well-planned curriculum in the Foundation Stage engages children well and contributes effectively to their enjoyment of school and their good progress. In the rest of the school, a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities broadens pupils' horizons and enhances the otherwise satisfactory curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. Personal, social and health education, including race equality, is promoted effectively, and recent improvements ensure that there is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. With the increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, the school is also gradually improving its satisfactory provision for these pupils.

The well-structured approach to developing writing and fostering enjoyment of reading by capitalising on pupils' interests is raising achievement in English. However, the impact of the daily 'quick maths' sessions is limited because curricular planning lacks a clear focus on using and applying mathematical skills in real-life situations, including in different subjects. The best mathematical learning occurs when the teacher goes beyond the scheme of work to do this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The very high level of commitment that all staff have to promoting pupils' well-being is at the centre of the outstanding provision in this aspect of the school's work. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and include excellent attention to health and safety during the ongoing building works.

Strong management and skilled learning mentors ensure that any pupil and, where relevant, their family, receives sensitive support should they experience difficulty. The school reaches out to pupils and their parents. Both are overwhelmingly positive about the school and greatly value what it does for them. The excellent links with the Children's Centre and other agencies enable parents to engage with the school on a positive footing even before their children start. Every effort is made to eliminate bullying or any other form of harassment and to promote race equality. All of this has contributed to the pupils' much improved attendance. Pupils usually receive good academic guidance and support and their progress is discussed well with them. They understand their targets and know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

All leaders and managers, including governors, are highly focused on raising achievement through promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. This is the driving force behind the discernible improvement in pupils' progress in the past year. The new management team is doing everything possible to remove obstacles to pupils' learning. The headteacher's assertion that staff 'will willingly go the extra mile for these children' is borne out by their high level of commitment to the pupils, their good support for each other and the excellent teamwork evident in all that they do. It results in a highly supportive, happy learning environment in which pupils and staff feel safe, secure and valued, and pupils enjoy learning.

The school has improved since the previous inspection and a well-focused school improvement plan provides a secure scaffold for further improvement. However, although managers have

identified the issue, the school is not yet providing enough practical opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical learning in different contexts. More remains to be done to see the full impact of some of the innovations but the school has prioritised correctly. Its self-evaluation procedures are robust and rigorous checks on learning are gradually eliminating the remaining inconsistencies in teaching. This has already led to good improvement in the teaching of writing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	2
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Allens Croft Primary School, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6RP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. You told us how much you enjoy school and your improved attendance is a clear indication of this. Your school is satisfactory. That means it does some things well, and it is clearly getting better because of this, but there are some areas in which it could do even more. Here are some of the good things.

- The teaching you receive and the progress you make are both satisfactory but they are getting better. The standards you reach are below average but they too are improving.
- You are taught the right things and the school is working hard to find ways to make your learning even more interesting for you.
- Your teachers are helping you to make faster progress in reading and writing by listening to you and giving you interesting things to read and write about.
- The staff care deeply for each one of you. They guide and support you exceptionally well and work really hard to help you overcome any difficulties. You told us you really appreciate this.
- Because of what the school does, you behave well, care for and respect each other, know how to keep yourselves safe, and have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves fit and healthy.
- The headteacher and governors run the school well. They and all the staff have your best interests at heart and work together really well to make the school a happy, safe and secure place for you to learn and play.

These are the things we have asked to school to make even better.

- Help you make faster progress in mathematics by giving you more practical tasks to do and more opportunities to use your mathematical learning in other subjects.
- Make teaching really good at all times so that you can make as much progress as possible in every lesson.

We hope that all of this helps you to learn more and more and that you will continue to enjoy learning now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector