

Bellfield Junior NC SU School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103291
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286618
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Dore
Headteacher	Tracey Cameron
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Vineyard Road Northfield Birmingham B31 1PT
Telephone number	0121 4642895
Fax number	0121 4642892

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. It includes 10 pupils in a special unit for those with a hearing impairment. Most pupils are White British but there is a larger than average proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Almost all speak English as their first language. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds but a significant minority are from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and with statements of special educational need are greater than average. Pupils' attainment on entry has declined and is a little below average. The headteacher and another member of the leadership team have very recently returned to school after extended periods of absence.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for all its pupils. It is improving and has a number of significant strengths but several aspects need to improve further. The school is aware of this because it has an accurate view of its performance based on careful and systematic checks led by the headteacher. There is a heavy reliance on the headteacher to provide the leadership and initiate change. Progress in raising standards and the quality of teaching is satisfactory but there has been some interruption to this as a result of the long-term absence of the headteacher and another member of the leadership team. The school has successfully involved the Local Authority (LA) in helping bring about change. Ideas developed through this involvement together with the very recent return of its senior staff mean the school is soundly placed to improve further.

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 6 are close to the national average, except in English, where they are below average. The speaking and listening and writing skills of pupils are relatively weak and this hinders their progress. The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. Those in the special unit are helped to feel part of the larger school family and they contribute fully to the life of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and staff act as good role models for pupils, helping to demonstrate caring and respectful relationships. Pupils are keen to be involved in helping to run their school but the profile and work of the school council has been allowed to decline significantly this year.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although teaching is good in a significant proportion of lessons, there are lessons where the work set is not matched closely enough to the needs of different groups and sometimes does not extend pupils enough, especially those who are more able. The curriculum is satisfactory and there are lots of good activities beyond the classroom and the normal school day. Pupils like these activities, such as the opportunity to take part in a triathlon competition at the university, and this is one factor in pupils' positive enjoyment of school life. Their attendance is good, having improved significantly. It is above that of many schools in similar neighbourhoods in the LA. Pupils feel safe and they are well cared for, guided and supported. There are good systems for working in partnership with outside groups to support those who are vulnerable or who have particular difficulties.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The hearing impaired unit is well led. Other senior staff support the headteacher well but not all have either the skills or experience needed to play a full role in leading aspects of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring teachers match work carefully to the needs of different groups within the class and have higher expectations of all pupils, particularly those who are more able.
- Promote pupils' speaking and listening skills and provide more stimulating opportunities for extended writing in order to raise standards in English.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities for checking the performance of the school more widely across the leadership team.
- Restore the profile of the school council to enable pupils to contribute more to the development of their school. A small proportion of the 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

Standards are close to the national average, although below average in English. Achievement has improved and is now satisfactory by pupils of all abilities. There is no significant variation in achievement between different groups, although standards reached by boys in their writing remain significantly below that of girls because they start from a lower base in Year 3. Although the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has declined in recent years, standards by the end of Year 6 have been broadly maintained. Last year they rose, with some pupils exceeding their targets. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to maintain that improved level this year even though their starting points in Year 3 were lower than those of some previous groups. These pupils are very clear about their targets and their teachers' expectations of them. Very recent assessments show that almost all are on track to reach their targets, and some are set to exceed them. Many pupils' speaking and listening skills are weak and their vocabulary is limited. They find it difficult to think about or explain what they are learning and some struggle to think of good ideas and words to use in their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour is good. They understand the consequences of their actions, including the small minority with challenging behaviour, and respond well to the rewards systems promoted consistently by the staff. They know the importance of keeping themselves safe and value the structures in place in school to promote this. One pupil summed this up when she said, 'I like coming to school because I know I am safe here.' Those pupils with jobs and responsibilities around the school are keen to play their part but the school council has not met very often this year or made many significant suggestions or decisions. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and on the basis of last year's experiences they are looking forward to the next 'Health Week'. Pupils are gaining a satisfactory range of skills to support them in their next stage of education, including the use of computers, but weak language skills limit their confidence when tackling problems or working independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are improving as a result of a number of new developments. There are several good features found consistently across the school. One of these is the effective ways in which teachers manage and promote pupils' behaviour so they can all concentrate on what they are learning about. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively where they are most needed to support specific groups or individuals with learning difficulties or a hearing impairment. Another emerging strength is the way teachers are helping pupils to become clearer about precisely what they are expected to do and at the end of their work to reflect on their progress. However, in too many lessons the work set is not matched closely enough to the needs of specific groups. Often it is adapted well to support pupils with learning difficulties, but in too few cases are more able pupils challenged or extended throughout the lesson.

Teachers make sure the classrooms are stimulating and displays contain lots of clear guidance to pupils about current things being learnt. In some lessons teachers talk for long periods and not enough is done to motivate pupils to improve their own limited speaking skills by encouraging them to explain their ideas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The personal, social and emotional curriculum is strong, with a high profile around the school contributing well to pupils' good personal development. The curriculum is adapted carefully to meet the needs of some pupils with learning difficulties but there are few ways it is adapted to extend the most able. The quality of other aspects of the curriculum is less consistent. In English there has been insufficient innovative response to pupils' weak speaking and listening skills or to the way many pupils, especially the boys, struggle with their writing. This has slowed progress in English. One boy told inspectors, 'My mind goes blank and I can't think what to write', while another said, 'I need more time' and another referred to needing more ideas and 'good words' from teachers. Pupils enjoy the wide range of practical activities, the many visits and special events, for example, the themed weeks and the residential trip, and being involved in the mini-enterprise project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A major success of the school has been the very effective ways the school has worked with pupils, their families and outside professionals to promote and encourage regular and prompt attendance. Whilst there is good support and care for all pupils, the school is particularly successful in the way it helps specific pupils with problems. An example of this is the way those with a hearing impairment are supported within their unit and throughout the school day. The quality of academic guidance has improved substantially as teachers have become more skilled at ensuring pupils are clear about the next things they need to learn, especially in English and mathematics. However, longer-term targets are not established in all year groups or always high enough. The school has rigorous systems to implement procedures designed to safeguard pupils and these are understood and implemented by all staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has quickly regained a clear and accurate view of the school on her return to school. During her absence the deputy headteacher and colleagues ensured the school operated smoothly but some key decisions were put on hold, for example, the appointment of two new posts of responsibility, and this slowed the rate of school improvement. There is a well-structured and systematic programme for checking on the school's performance, particularly the quality of teaching, much of which is reliant on the headteacher to implement. Some other leaders share in this effectively, for example, the well focused check on mathematics led by the subject leader which resulted in useful guidance on how to improve pupils' learning. Some other leaders are less effective and need further training in their leadership roles. Governors are committed to the school. They receive good information from the headteacher and others, know the school reasonably well and are setting up ways of checking the school's performance. The school is keenly implementing ideas from the LA on how to raise standards, for example, holding regular

discussions about progress made by each pupil. The school has lots of detailed information about each individual pupil but there is a lack of clarity in the way the information is organised in order to identify overall patterns or trends amongst pupils.

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	2

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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

Dear Children

Bellfield Junior School, Northfield, Birmingham B31 1PT

Thank you for making me and my colleagues feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school. We are pleased to say there are several aspects that are good but there are also some things which need to get better. Here are some of the 'highlights':

- You work hard and make steady progress in your lessons, but some of you find writing difficult.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and you are thoughtful towards one another.
- The teachers plan lots of interesting activities for you and make sure their classrooms have interesting displays to help you with your work.
- Most of you like lessons best when you are doing practical things, using computers, going on visits or taking part in special events, such as the triathlon competition.
- All the adults who work at the school take good care of you and make sure you are safe.
- The headteacher and some other leaders are good at planning ways of making the school even better.
- We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on these four things:
- Ensure teachers always set you work which is hard enough to help you make faster progress.
- Help you do better in English by giving you more chances to talk about what you are thinking and learning and more ways of encouraging you with your writing.
- Find ways of helping all the staff who are leaders to check how well the school is doing in the areas they lead.
- Make sure the school council meets more often and gets involved in ideas about improving the school.

You can help in all of these by continuing to work hard and keep the school a happy place.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector