

Ley Hill Junior and Infant (NC) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103297
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286620
Inspection dates	26–27 June 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sylvia Dicker
Headteacher	Marilyn Hull
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Rhayader Road Birmingham B31 1TX
Telephone number	0121 4644302
Fax number	0121 4642811

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school, working in very challenging circumstances. Amongst these is the extensive redevelopment of its catchment area, which has caused high levels of pupil movement in and out of the school. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but there is a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average. Children start school in the Nursery with skills and abilities well below the levels expected for their age. The school had a new headteacher in September 2006. It has Healthy Schools status and bird-friendly status.

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 quality of education for its pupils, and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is getting better because the quality of teaching, which is also satisfactory, is improving. Teaching is rigorously checked, previous staffing issues have been resolved, and the school has made good use of its involvement in an Intensive Support Programme (ISP).

Standards in national tests for Year 6 were broadly average in 2006. In the current Year 6 class they are below average. High levels of pupil mobility and the well-above-average proportion of pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties, some very new to the school, have contributed greatly to this. Provision and progress are good in the Foundation Stage and, this year, the majority of children have reached the nationally expected standards in most aspects of their learning.

The school is working hard to make its satisfactory curriculum more responsive to pupils' different learning needs. At present, the curriculum does not promote literacy and numeracy basic skills sufficiently in different subjects. There are also some weaknesses in planning, assessment and target setting that mean underachievement is not always tackled at the earliest opportunity. The school is aware of this. It has made a sound start on improving the way pupils' progress is tracked and assessed, and the information is used to improve their learning.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are the result of the good care, guidance and support they receive. One pupil offered: 'I really like this school. They really take care of you.' Within a calm, supportive learning environment, the school deals effectively with the very challenging behaviour of a significant minority of pupils. Particularly good attention is paid to pupils' social and emotional development. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They make a good contribution to the community and are satisfactorily prepared for their future.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is improving rapidly under the new headteacher's excellent leadership. It is characterised by her obvious passion to help pupils do as well as they possibly can. The recently restructured senior leadership team is supporting her well but there is still some way to go to implement fully the improvements in assessment and in the curriculum, which are clearly beginning to help pupils to make faster progress. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate and its priorities are the right ones. All of this, and the way the whole staff is pulling together, gives the school good capacity for further improvement. However, while governors are very committed to the school, they do not yet check its work with sufficient rigour.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the work on refining assessment and target setting and link planning more closely to pupils' developing learning needs.
- Make sure that literacy and numeracy skills are promoted more effectively in all subjects.
- Increase the governors' role in holding the school to account for how well it does.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with well-below-average skills and abilities. They make good progress and achieve well in the Foundation Stage. For the majority of children currently at the end of Reception, standards are as expected nationally. Achievement is satisfactory in the rest of the school. Standards are below average in Year 2, especially in mathematics. The school has introduced a number of measures to improve progress in mathematics and in writing, areas that are particularly weak on entry to the school. So far, it has been more successful in writing but, in all age groups, it is working hard to improve pupils' ability to calculate more rapidly.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have risen over the last three years. In 2006, overall standards were close to the national average and the school met its targets. Standards in English, however, remained below average. This represented satisfactory progress for the pupils. Achievement is satisfactory in the current Year 6 too, although standards overall are below average for that year group. Here, a high proportion of pupils have left, joined or re-joined the school as a result of the extensive housing re-development locally. This greatly affected their learning and progress. However, progress is now improving throughout the school as a result of improvements in teaching and the curriculum, and particularly in target setting and assessment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The good support children receive from the moment they start school helps them quickly to gain confidence and develop good relationships with staff and other children. Throughout the school, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good but, although satisfactory, there is scope for further improvement in cultural development. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their positive attitudes. They describe the school as 'happy', 'friendly' and 'caring' and are confident that staff will help them sort out any problems. This echoes their parents' views; for example, 'my child is in safe hands', the staff 'do a lot for the children' and 'make you feel your child really matters'.

Pupils are friendly and polite. They care about their school. They know that they and their views are valued and readily take on responsibility, for example, as school councillors. Most pupils behave well. However, the very challenging behaviour of a significant minority sometimes disrupts learning for other pupils. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy but a significant number of children are resistant to the idea of healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, much good teaching was observed during the inspection. Under the guidance of the new headteacher, teachers have worked hard this year to improve how they track pupils' progress. As a result, pupils' progress is improving, although much more remains to be done to refine assessment procedures and ensure pupils' best possible progress.

Teachers explain clearly to pupils what they are expected to learn in each lesson and check at the end whether these learning objectives have been met. They set targets for different groups of pupils and use teaching assistants well to help pupils with learning difficulties. However, they do not always break these targets down well enough for individual pupils, for example, through their marking, the quality of which is variable. Additionally, teachers' planning does not always take account of pupils' ongoing progress and it is seldom evaluated to show how well pupils have achieved in each lesson.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, dealing firmly but sensitively and at times almost unobtrusively with those who might disrupt learning for others. This contributes greatly to the pupils' good personal development and well-being.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum rightly emphasises raising achievement in English and mathematics but it does not promote literacy and numeracy skills well enough in all subjects. It is under review and there are emerging good examples of how the school intends to make it more creative. For example, the business enterprise project in Year 5 and the 'Goodnight, Mr Tom' project in Year 6, which pupils greatly enjoyed, brought different subjects together well. This successfully enhanced pupils' overall progress in literacy, numeracy and history, and developed their understanding of the wider world.

Personal, social and emotional development permeates the school's work and contributes greatly to pupils' learning and personal development. However, there are too few opportunities within the curriculum to promote pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by the good range of additional learning activities in and beyond the normal school day. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is satisfactory. It too is improving as recent changes in leadership begin to take effect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All staff are highly committed to the care and welfare of the pupils and are very sensitive to their needs. Staff are extremely vigilant and safeguarding procedures, including those for promoting good behaviour and attendance, are robust. The learning mentor identifies and supports vulnerable pupils and their families very effectively. The school's excellent links with external agencies further enhance this support. Good induction procedures help children settle quickly into school, whatever their age, and pupils receive good support to help them transfer to their secondary school. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils throughout the school have targets to improve their learning, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 know their targets and how to achieve them. In other year groups, pupils are not always as clear about this and therefore the overall effectiveness of target setting is more limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has come a long way in a short time because of the drive, enthusiasm and clarity of vision of its new headteacher. She has firmly but sensitively focused the whole school on raising pupils' achievement through tracking their progress and setting targets for them. This

work builds effectively on that started by the ISP because group targets are becoming more refined to suit individual need. This work is still at an early stage.

The checks made on teaching and learning are robust and accurate, and weaknesses are followed up. The newly re-structured senior management team contribute effectively to this. Having concentrated on getting this right, the school is now turning its attention to improving the curriculum, the way basic skills are taught through it, and the leadership and management of different aspects of it. Much remains to be done in these areas. However, the measured approach to introducing change has brought the school successfully to the point where it can begin to accelerate the pace of that change. The well-constructed school improvement plan supports the school effectively in this.

Governors are well informed. They share the headteacher's vision of an improved school but do not carry out rigorous enough checks on its outcomes. Nevertheless, they and all leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has improved since its previous inspection.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	3
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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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

28 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ley Hill Primary School, Birmingham, B31 1TX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. You told us the school is a friendly, happy place to be and that the staff really care for you, and you are right. Overall, your school is satisfactory. That means it does some things well and could do other things even better. It is improving because staff have your best interests at heart and are working very hard to help each one of you to make better progress. Here is a summary of what we found.

- All of you make at least satisfactory progress by the time you leave the school, and children in Nursery and Reception make good progress.
- Your teachers do what they should do to help you learn and are continually looking for ways to help you make even faster progress.
- You and your parents are right to praise the good care, guidance and support the school gives you. Because of this, you enjoy learning, know how to take care of yourselves and others, and care for the world in which you live.
- Most of you behave well but a small number of you could behave better and make life easier for yourselves, staff and other pupils.
- Your school is properly led and managed. Your headteacher is very good at helping staff and governors see how to help you do even better than you do now.

Here is what we have asked the school to do to help you make faster progress.

- Speed up the work it is doing to assess and track your progress and pay more attention to this when planning your work and setting your targets.
- Make sure that you are given every opportunity to practise your reading, writing and number skills.
- Make sure that the governors keep a much closer check on how well you are all doing.

We hope that as a result of these things you will continue to enjoy learning now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector