

Marlborough Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103312
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286627
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mohammed Khalid
Headteacher	Gail Vanes
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Green Lane Small Heath Birmingham B10 9NY
Telephone number	0121 4647933
Fax number	0121 7530527

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large junior school, where the vast majority of pupils are of Pakistani heritage, and an increasing number of pupils are of Somali origin. A minority of pupils in every year group are at the early stages of learning English, especially in the current Year 6. A slightly larger proportion of pupils than normal leaves and joins the school during the year. On entry to the school standards are low, especially for older pupils. Language development is an area of particular weakness. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than is usually found. A small number of pupils suffer from hearing impairment. A very high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

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 and improving standard of education. Whilst standards are well below average, this represents sound achievement from pupils' low starting points.

The headteacher provides purposeful leadership. Her clear direction for improvement has ensured the school has combined strengths in promoting pupils' confidence with an increased focus on raising standards. Hard-working colleagues provide sound support. Many are new to their management responsibilities and are developing their skills rapidly. Senior leaders evaluate the school's performance realistically and generally take appropriate measures to promote improvement. However, they do not consistently monitor the impact of their actions often enough, so that they can correct mistakes at the early stages. Governance is good. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and improving.

The school's strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy is starting to have a positive impact on reversing previous underachievement. Standards in English have risen sharply, particularly in writing. However, there is still some way to go. Standards in mathematics remain too low, despite recent improvements. Teaching is satisfactory overall and often good. It is improving rapidly, because of very effective coaching by skilled staff within the school. Particular strengths are close attention to language development in every lesson and better teaching of writing. However, there are still some areas of weakness that limit achievement. The curriculum is sound overall, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to work independently and to consolidate their learning, especially in mathematics. Marking in English provides good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, but this is not the case in mathematics, where comments are too vague.

Pupils' good personal development, including their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, supports their tremendous enjoyment of school and their understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils have extremely good manners and behave well, because they like and respect their teachers. They look for opportunities to be helpful. They work hard in lessons and attendance is above average, despite a number of pupils taking holidays abroad. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. They show great respect towards each other and the school functions as a safe and harmonious community. They take on responsibilities willingly.

The school provides satisfactory care, support and guidance. The quality of care and support is excellent. Pupils who start at this school look forward to the experience and feel very safe right from the start because of the excellent Induction Day they attend. Academic guidance is satisfactory and contributes to pupils' sound progress. By the time they leave, pupils are soundly prepared for secondary education. Parents hold the school in high regard, and especially appreciate the approachability, care and commitment of staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics and English by providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently and to consolidate their learning.
- Ensure marking in mathematics provides clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement plans more frequently, so plans are adjusted at the early stages.

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

Although standards are well below average, this represents satisfactory achievement from pupils' starting points. Pupils reach fairly challenging targets. Achievement in science is good, because pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn through practical investigations and to discuss their findings. Standards in English were too low in 2005–2006, because new methods of teaching were not implemented well. Standards have now risen sharply, because these initial difficulties have been overcome. Speaking and listening develop well and reading skills develop steadily throughout the school. Whilst pupils still make errors in basic spelling and punctuation, standards in writing have risen substantially in the current year, because of improved teaching. Standards in mathematics have been too low and pupils have not achieved as much as they should. However, the range of strategies the school has introduced is beginning to have an impact and pupils are starting to make better progress. The large number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, make sound progress. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English make sound and occasionally good progress, as a result of effectively organised support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to school are extremely positive. Their keen enthusiasm is apparent in their confident participation in lessons. This has contributed to their improved achievement during the current year. Attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very aware of their own and others' cultures, as can be seen in their respectful attitudes. Pupils who are chosen by their peers to be trained as councillors ensure pupils know racism cannot be tolerated. Behaviour is almost always good. In the few instances when there is low level disruption, it is generally managed well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. For example, levels of obesity at the school have fallen sharply as pupils eat a more healthy diet and take more exercise. From the first visit, pupils feel very secure in school, because staff deal extremely well with concerns. Pupils' economic well-being is not as strong as other areas, because their development of basic skills, especially in mathematics, is not as fast as it could be. They make a good contribution to the school and local community by taking on responsibilities such as maintaining an eco-garden.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships ensure that pupils enjoy their learning and are confident to offer answers in class. Speaking and listening skills develop well, because good attention is paid to this in all lessons, for example through the use of 'talk partners' to discuss work. The way in which pupils are encouraged to think through problems is also a particular strength. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and a wide range of activities to motivate pupils. They are very clear in their feedback and this helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Support from

adults within the class ensures that pupils understand their work well. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to tackle challenging work on their own, and to practise what they have learnt. Consequently their learning is not always fully consolidated. Occasionally, when the teaching does not fully engage pupils, the pace of learning is slowed by low-level disruption. However, this is generally managed well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum contributes to pupils' steady progress. It meets the very wide range of pupils' needs within the school, including those with hearing impairment and those at the early stages of learning English. It makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. The improvement of language development is addressed well in all lessons. Provision for English and mathematics is matched to the varying needs of pupils but they are not always given enough opportunity to work individually, thus preventing them from practising the skills they have been taught. The deployment of teaching assistants to assist children with specific needs is effective and helps the pupils to make sound progress. There is a very good programme to help pupils develop their spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding. There is a satisfactory range of visits, visitors and 'special days', which enhance pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Personal care and support are excellent, successfully promoting the safety and well-being of all pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and procedures for encouraging attendance are excellent. Because adults treat pupils with respect, pupils are confident in asking for help. Learners at risk are identified as soon as they enter the school and effective arrangements are made to meet their learning and emotional needs. In this, the school works very well with other agencies and parents.

Academic guidance is sound and contributes to pupils' satisfactory achievement. Pupils know what their targets are. Marking in literacy provides pupils with good guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. However, marking in mathematics is not specific and is much less effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a strong sense of direction for the school, aimed at raising standards and promoting pupils' self-esteem. She is supported and challenged well by an informed governing body and has the strong support of parents. Senior and middle leaders, many of whom are relatively new to their roles, provide sound support. Effective coaching is improving the quality of teaching. This has resulted in improved standards and better achievement in science and in writing. Planning for the future is satisfactory, and is based on an adequate evaluation of the work of the school. However, senior managers do not monitor the implementation of plans frequently enough. For example, in 2005-06, the impact of strategies to improve writing was not checked early enough to discover that it needed further adjustment. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marlborough Junior School, Birmingham, B10 9NY

We really enjoyed being at your school. You were very polite and helpful and gave us your views about the school. A very large number of your parents and carers wrote to us, so please discuss this letter with them. You were all very positive, so you will not be surprised that we found that your school provides you with a satisfactory and improving education. These are the main things we found out about your school:

- You make satisfactory progress and there are strong signs that this is improving. However, standards in English and mathematics could still be higher.
- Teaching is satisfactory and much of it is good. Your speaking and listening skills are developed well.
- You have excellent attitudes to school and really enjoy your work. Attendance is high. You have very good manners.
- You know an awful lot about your own and other people's cultures and treat others in school with great care and respect. You eat healthily and try to keep fit.
- The programme of activities the school offers interests and motivates you.
- The school takes excellent care of you and helps develop your confidence.
- The headteacher and other staff are working really hard to make sure this becomes a good school.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- help you improve your work in English and mathematics by making sure you have more opportunities to work on your own and to practise what you have learnt
- make sure that marking in mathematics gives you good advice on how to improve your work
- check more often that improvement plans are working, so changes can be made if they are needed.

We could see you were all looking forward to joining your new classes when you spent some time with your new teachers, so we hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson Lead Inspector