

# Aston Tower Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103370
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	286640
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Cole

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	455
<b>School</b>	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alison Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Moore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 June 2002
<b>School address</b>	Upper Sutton Street Aston Birmingham B6 5BE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 3270339
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 3274101

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large inner-city school serves an area of exceptionally high deprivation. Nearly all pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and the great majority of them use English as an additional language. A small minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Children start at the school with exceptionally low attainment. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the normal age is much higher than normally found.

## 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 with some good features.

Pupils' good personal development and sense of well-being provide a good basis for their education. The school attends well to pupils' personal, social and emotional needs, and this is an important strength of the school. The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Pupils make good relationships with staff and each other and they find school a very safe and happy place to be. They grow in confidence, behave well and have positive attitudes.

The pupils' good attitudes and behaviour help them to achieve satisfactorily in their work although standards are low overall. Sound arrangements in the Foundation Stage lead to children's satisfactory progress, though their standards remain well below average at the end of the Reception Year. In the following years, pupils make further satisfactory progress. A range of significant recent improvements in the school has improved pupils' progress over the last two years. This has particularly helped present Year 2 pupils attain standards approaching the national standard – a distinct improvement over previous years. The progress of older pupils in Years 1 to 6 has also improved. Present Year 6 standards are exceptionally low, but this is mainly because these pupils started out with extremely low attainment, a significant number have learning difficulties, and a substantial number joined the school at a late stage of their primary education, in some cases with little or no English.

Pupils' satisfactory progress reflects the satisfactory quality of the teaching and curriculum. The teaching includes some very good practice alongside a good many satisfactory lessons. Senior staff are trying hard to improve consistency within a much-changed team of teachers, who are adapting to a range of new approaches that are not currently successfully implemented by all. Sometimes teachers do not expect enough from their pupils and they do not always set work that is challenging enough. However, teachers and support staff give much well-designed support to pupils. Most pupils are generally attentive to their teachers and their tasks and try hard, although occasionally this is not always true. The curriculum is mostly matched to the wide range of pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils' progress and enjoyment are greatly enhanced by extra events, visits and optional activities. There are missed opportunities to support pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy, and to make pupils' work more relevant and enjoyable, by linking activities in different subjects. Targets are not always clear enough for pupils to understand.

Satisfactory leadership and management of the school show a full commitment to meeting all pupils' needs and helping them achieve within a safe, caring and happy environment. The school is making a determined effort to raise standards and it is keeping an increasingly thorough check on its performance. It understands well how it can improve. Changes of staff at all levels have hindered improvement since the previous inspection but this has been satisfactory. However, the pace of recent improvement has been good and many valuable changes, including much-improved pupil attendance, have begun to take effect. This shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make the teaching more consistently effective by ensuring that teachers always set appropriately challenging work and always encourage pupils to try hard.

- Link work across the subjects of the curriculum to reinforce pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy, and to enhance the enjoyment of the work for pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Throughout the school, pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. Standards remain too low. In the last two years, more settled staffing, improved teaching and higher attendance have led to better pupil progress. This has helped pupils make up for much of the lost ground from earlier years, when some pupils' progress was adversely affected by poor attendance and staffing problems which hindered the quality of teaching. Pupils, regardless of background, individual needs, abilities or difficulties, now make satisfactory progress. Present Year 2 pupils' overall standard of work is much improved and not far below the national standard. Older pupils are also making better progress, which is seen in improved standards for pupils in Years 3 to 5. Present Year 6 standards remain very low, mainly because of the pupils' overall low profile of ability and high profile of learning difficulties, and partly because of the legacy of poor progress in earlier years.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

'We have a Friendship Stop for those who are lonely but nobody uses it', said a girl in Year 6. This illustrates the friendly, happy atmosphere pupils enjoy from their earliest days in the Nursery. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with their moral and social development being particularly strong. They say that bullying is not a problem and they know what to do should they ever feel harassed. Pupils enjoy school most of the time. They attend satisfactorily. Pupils know well how to stay safe and enthusiastically campaign for road safety outside the school. They also show a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. They talk expertly about eating healthy brown toast at playtime and not having crisps or fizzy drinks, and they respond eagerly to opportunities for exercise such as the lunchtime dance club. Pupils contribute well to the community, for example, through the school council and the Eco council, which encourages a clean and safe environment. They join in a local Young People's Parliament and some visit the House of Commons. They support other pupils as peer mediators and family group leaders. Pupils' good personal qualities and their good skills in information and communication technology (ICT) contribute well to their sound preparation for further education and for later life. Their literacy and numeracy skills make less of a contribution to this.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

In the Nursery, Reception classes and throughout Years 1 to 6, teachers and support assistants know their pupils well and relationships are good. Lessons are harmonious and purposeful. Systematic assessment of pupils' progress is generally used successfully to plan tasks and support that match pupils' needs. Teachers mark pupils' work helpfully to both give praise and show where the pupil can improve. The use of interactive whiteboards enlivens lessons and helps to hold pupils' interest. Extra help for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those whose first language is not English helps them to be fully involved in all activities and make satisfactory progress. Strong leadership has led to much improvement in the teaching

and a clearly agreed approach to planning, pupil management and other key aspects. However, there have been many recent staff changes and some of the strategies employed are new. This means that, despite careful checks by senior staff, there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of the teaching. For example, in some less successful lessons, some pupils' progress slows because the teaching and the tasks set are not sufficiently challenging. On a few other occasions, some pupils are not effectively encouraged to try or concentrate hard enough.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum generally meets the pupils' wide-ranging needs. There are sound individual programmes of work and support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from individual support and from the good range of languages spoken amongst members of staff. Opportunities for all pupils are much enriched by visitors to the school, by business and community links and by educational visits, including residential experiences for pupils in Years 3 to 6. These develop pupils' confidence and independence, increase understanding of the wider world and prepare them effectively for the future. The Aston Pride community ICT project successfully encourages parents and pupils to develop their skills together. Pupils then use their ICT skills well to support their learning in other subjects. Although literacy and numeracy lessons are given a high priority, not enough is done to link work across the subjects in ways that could reinforce these basic skills and make pupils' tasks more meaningful, and increase enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say they feel very safe and that staff give them all the help they need. They know that if they have worries they can talk to an adult who will listen to them and help them. A careful check is kept on how well pupils thrive, both personally and academically. There is now rigorous checking and promotion of attendance, and these have yielded significant improvements. Formal procedures for safeguarding pupils are thorough, kept up-to-date and supported by regular staff training. Induction arrangements for pupils starting school and for those moving to the school from abroad or other schools are good. Pupils are given sound guidance on their learning. They generally understand how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. However, pupils sometimes find the language of the targets they are given difficult to understand.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Improving leadership and management has gone a long way to overcome previous difficulties experienced by the school, which included high levels of staff turnover and sickness absence, many changes in senior leadership and poor pupil attendance. A more established staff team is following the strong lead given by the headteacher and senior colleagues in a determined drive to improve the school. There is a good ethos of pride in the school, commitment to equal opportunities, good relations with parents and the local community, and productive partnerships with other schools, colleges and agencies. Governors are supportive and keen to encourage improvement. Many significant improvements have been achieved in pupil attendance, in the teaching and assessment of pupils, in checks on the school's performance and in the progress

pupils make. However, many of these changes are new and, in the case of some of the teaching, inconsistently effective. They have yet to show the full impact of the improved leadership and management.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Aston Tower Community Primary School, Aston, Birmingham B6 5BE

The inspectors who visited your school recently would like to thank all of you for your friendly welcome. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you.

It was pleasing to find that your personal development is good. You enjoy school and you get on well with each other and with the adults. You all make it a happy, friendly school. You have a sensible attitude to school, and to your work, and your behaviour is good. All of this is helping you to make satisfactory progress in your learning.

Some of you told us how much help the teachers and the others adults give you. We saw this for ourselves. All the adults care for you very well. They listen to your worries and help you deal with them. They give you lots of help and encouragement. The teachers give you suitable lessons and generally provide the right sort of work for you to do. They also organise lots of interesting visits and events and put on lunchtime clubs which you enjoy.

We have said that yours is a satisfactory school and that in some ways it is good. The adults in charge of the school are doing what they should to care for you and help you learn. They are trying hard to improve the school. However, we have suggested two ways that the school could give you still more help.

We noticed that you learn from some lessons more than others. We think that you would make better progress if all of your teachers made sure that they set you challenging work. We also think you could improve your literacy and numeracy skills if you had more opportunities to practise them in other subjects, like science, history or geography. We think learning could also be more fun if the teachers joined subjects together sometimes. You can help too by making sure you attend regularly and by continuing to work hard and do your best.

We wish you all the best for the future,

M H Cole Lead Inspector