



Brandhall Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103976
Local Authority Sandwell
Inspection number 286825
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector David Carrington

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Edinburgh Road
School category	Community		Oldbury
Age range of pupils	3–11		B68 0ST
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4225336
Number on roll (school)	262	Fax number	0121 4222847
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Peter Frost
		Headteacher	Elaine Fitzgerald
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	16–17 January 2007	286825

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brandhall is larger than most primary schools, although the number of pupils has fallen in recent years. Nearly all the pupils come from White British families and speak English as their first language. They live in the area around the school. There is an above-average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Just under a quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties. There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff during the last three years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brandhall Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. There has been recent improvement to pupils' achievement, which is satisfactory. This improvement has followed from changes to teaching staff and the removal of the inadequate teaching experienced in the past by some pupils in Years 3 and 4. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 6.

Standards are below average, although pupils make the expected gains in skills and knowledge from their well-below-average starting points in Nursery. Mathematics and writing are the two key areas where standards are not high enough. Pupils' weaknesses in solving problems and making reliable mental calculations hold back their progress in mathematics. The development of writing skills is not sufficiently linked to work in subjects outside English. There are times when pupils of all abilities complete exactly the same work, which does not challenge the higher attainers enough. Pupils with learning difficulties are given satisfactory support and make sound progress. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good opportunities for learning outside lessons.

The personal development of pupils is good. They are friendly, polite and well behaved. They have good opportunities to give their views and ideas, which staff use when making decisions. Pupils work well together and support each other cheerfully. Staff are committed to the safeguarding of all pupils and give good pastoral care.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has good expectations of her staff and pupils and leads the school effectively. There is a temporary senior leadership team which is steering the school soundly towards better quality education and improved achievement. The capacity for future improvement is satisfactory. School leaders and the governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have developed an appropriate school improvement plan to ensure things get better. The school's evaluation of its work is accurate. The setting of targets for individual pupils and marking of work to show how well they are learning are inconsistent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills of problem solving and mental calculations and develop writing across the curriculum, in order to increase achievement.
- Use the information produced when tracking achievement to make sure all pupils, especially the higher attainers, are provided with work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Ensure that pupils know their individual targets for achievement and use the marking of work to show how successfully these have been met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average, although they are not far from average in English. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. The most brisk progress is in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 6.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. Their work is well planned to ensure they build skills and knowledge steadily. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, although their starting points in language and literacy, and especially their mathematical development, are much lower than in most schools. This affects the standards reached later in their education. In other areas of work, most children meet their learning targets by the time they join Year 1.

In the past it is evident that pupils' progress in the infant and junior classes varied too much. In particular, inadequate teaching in Years 3 and 4 meant pupils made insufficient progress. This year, provision in these two years has improved because of staffing changes and pupils are making more consistent and satisfactory progress. Pupils pick up speed in their learning in Year 6 and progress is good through that year. It is also good in Year 1.

The higher attainers are not always challenged enough by their work, so they do not maximise their achievement consistently. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because there are appropriate systems to ensure their work meets their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school. They say that they enjoy learning new things and that teachers make their work interesting. The personal, social and emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage is good. Most pupils attend regularly and about a quarter have had no absences since last September. A few pupils have had a lot of absences and this has affected the school's overall rate, which is below average. There are good procedures in place to track and improve attendance and the rate so far this year is above that of 2005–6.

Pupils have good understanding of the need to keep healthy and safe. They are concerned that some parents bring their cars down the drive at the time when the pupils are going home. In response to the pupils' concerns, school leaders propose to ask parents not to do this.

There is a good sense of community in school. Pupils take good care of each other and are pleased about other pupils' successes. The school council is in the process of deciding which charity to support each term and the pupils say it is important to help people who have medical or other needs. Pupils are prepared soundly for the next stage of their education and for life outside school, though there are still things to do to improve their basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching has improved since last September and is satisfactory. The inadequate teaching experienced by some pupils in Years 3 and 4 has been removed and they are now taught satisfactorily. Pupils with learning difficulties are taught soundly.

Children in the Foundation Stage are provided with a variety of activities that make use of indoor and outdoor learning areas. These activities are well planned and resourced and staff show good teaching skills in encouraging the children to learn effectively.

The setting of individual targets for learning is inconsistent. Where targets are set they are not supported enough when work is marked. Thus, some, but not all, pupils know what they have to learn next, but most do not know how well they have done or what they need to do to improve. Very few pupils are made aware through marking of the levels they are reaching or need to reach.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There have been some good improvements made to work in information and communication technology, and provision of out-of-school activities is good. There is appropriate coverage of subjects and literacy and numeracy form the very necessary centrepiece of the curriculum. Within these two areas there is room for improvement. In numeracy, the focus on problem solving, investigation and quick mental calculation is not strong enough. There are not enough opportunities to develop literacy skills when writing in subjects outside English.

Planning is thorough and is monitored soundly. There are occasions when the work set is similar for all pupils in the class, which does not provide enough challenge for the higher-attaining pupils in particular. Pupils with learning difficulties have a satisfactory curriculum which is matched appropriately to their needs. Personal, social and health education and physical education lessons make a valuable contribution to pupils' alertness to health and safety issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good, providing pupils with an environment in which they feel safe and well supported. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils are thorough and well organised, and staff are attentive to the well-being of individuals.

Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Teachers and support staff give pupils the help they need in lessons, but the approach to setting targets for individuals, including those with learning difficulties, is inconsistent in its use of assessment

information. The school works effectively with parents and with outside agencies to provide additional support where pupils need it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides the school with good, strong leadership and has a clear vision for the future. Her focus on improving provision and raising standards has been hindered by considerable staff turnover and absence. As a result, it has made it difficult to create stability in the senior leadership team or consistency and continuity in the classroom. Nonetheless, morale in the school is good. The current senior leadership team are firmly focused on the drive for improvement. There is a good commitment to inclusion and the need for all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

The school's processes for self-evaluation are satisfactory, but have been affected by turnover amongst senior staff. Some good systems for monitoring and tracking performance have been introduced, though it is too soon for them to have had a significant impact. The governors carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are very supportive of the work of the school and of the headteacher, and keen to develop their roles more fully.

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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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	3
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	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

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.

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	2
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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. You told us that you enjoy school and that your teachers are helpful and friendly.

We found out a lot about your school. We think it gives you a satisfactory education. The other things that we think are important are:

- You make the progress expected in your work.
- You are well behaved, polite and considerate, and work well together.
- You are taught soundly.
- The children in Nursery and Reception enjoy all the good things provided for them.
- Teachers and other staff look after you carefully.
- Your headteacher wants you all to do as well as you can and other staff agree with her.

There are three main things that can be improved to make your school an even better place.

- You need more practice at solving mathematical problems, to be quicker when working out answers and to write clearly about things you learn in the subjects you study.
- Some of you should have harder work that is different from the tasks set for other pupils.
- Your teachers should set you targets for your learning that they discuss with you when they mark your work.

We are sure you will want to help your teachers make these improvements. You can do this by continuing to tell them in lessons how well you think you are learning.

Good luck with your studies.