

Conway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103202
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308248
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Parwez Hussain
Headteacher	Peter Courts
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2005
School address	Conway Road Sparkbrook Birmingham B11 1NS
Telephone number	01216 750622
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Conway Primary is situated in a residential area. It is much larger than most other primary schools. There is a playgroup for children aged three to four and a Sure Start Base on the school site. The majority of pupils are of Pakistani background with the remainder from other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is high. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. The school has been awarded the Healthy Schools Mark, Active Mark and Impetus Award for work in citizenship and cultural links.

The playgroup was inspected by a childcare inspector at the same time as this inspection and is reported on separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage because of satisfactory teaching. The children's literacy and mathematical skills are below those expected for their age when they start in Year 1. From this point, the pupils make inadequate progress. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading in national assessments have been significantly below the national average since 2003. In mathematics, they have been well below since 2005. Attainment in writing has fluctuated from broadly average to below average and it is now exceptionally low. Over a five-year period, standards in the end-of-Year 6 national tests have remained exceptionally low.

Although the school's assessment information shows that pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and that an increasing proportion of pupils at Key Stage 2 are on track to achieving their end of year targets, this information is not supported by inspection evidence. There are significant levels of underachievement in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is inadequate because pupils do not make sufficient progress. While there is some satisfactory teaching and a small proportion is good, there is not enough good teaching to eliminate rapidly the legacy of underachievement in the school. Many teachers do not have high enough expectations and do not accurately assess pupils' work. Consequently, tasks do not effectively meet the needs of different learners, challenge pupils or move their learning on to the next level.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils behave well and respond with enthusiasm when they have the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities in the school. Well developed enrichment activities, school assemblies and close links with a school in Pakistan, result in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Clubs, opportunities to take part in arts festivals and links with the local community enhance the satisfactory curriculum. Family learning is a strong feature and the school has worked hard to include parents in supporting their children's learning.

The headteacher, deputy headteachers and members of the senior management team have worked well with staff and governors to create a positive environment where pupils feel well cared for and supported. However, they have not been able to improve rates of progress or raise standards. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has been involved in a range of initiatives to improve pupils' performance. However, these actions have failed to make a significant impact on pupils' progress and eliminating weaknesses in teaching because of limitations in monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring of the school's work lacks rigour and does not hold the staff accountable or provide them with the guidance they need to accelerate pupils' progress and improve the quality of their teaching. The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate and does not identify the school's most pressing priorities. While it recognises that achievement and standards are inadequate, it does not make the link between teaching, leadership and management or the impact these have on pupils' academic performance. The school has reconsidered some of its practice following a recent local authority review. However, it has not acted on the local authority's recommendations with urgency or rigour. This, alongside

the sustained underachievement in the school, demonstrates that the school does not have the capacity to make the necessary changes.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Good liaison between the school, parents, the playgroup and the SureStart base results in a positive start to school life. Consequently, children feel safe and settle in quickly. The children enter Nursery with levels of attainment that are below those expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Performance in other areas is that normally expected for their age. The children make satisfactory progress overall because of satisfactory teaching but by the time they start in Year 1, most are working below the early learning goals in literacy and numeracy. In the other areas of learning, progress is broadly satisfactory with children working within and sometimes above the early learning goals set for children of this age. Teachers generally plan well for small group and teacher-led activities so that children have the opportunity to learn through practical experiences. However, sometimes staff spend too long talking to the whole class and this reduces the time children have to take part in these activities and develop their independence. The children do not have sufficient opportunities to learn through outside play because the Foundation Stage does not have a suitably dedicated outdoor area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment, to ensure that all teaching is good or better.
- Improve leadership and management and ensure procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation are robust and rigorous in securing rapid improvements in pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and the more able, make inadequate progress from Years 1 to 6. By the time they leave the school, pupils' standards are exceptionally low. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. During Key Stage 1, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In the most recent Year 2 teacher assessments, standards in reading and writing were exceptionally low. They were well below average in mathematics. This slow rate of progress and low levels of achievement continue throughout Key Stage 2. In the Year 6 national tests in 2007, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was exceptionally low. This represents inadequate achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels have improved over the last three years and they are now average. Pupils behave sensibly. In lessons, most pupils show positive attitudes but, when teaching is inadequate, a minority lose concentration and drift off task. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a particularly strong understanding of a wide range of different cultures. They have a satisfactory understanding of the need to keep healthy and stay safe both in and out of school. Raising money for charities enables pupils

to make a positive contribution to the wider community. Although pupils are keen to take on responsibility, the opportunities within school are too limited. The pupils on the school council make suggestions but the younger pupils are not involved in this process. Pupils' slow progress in acquiring literacy and numeracy skills restricts their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although there is some satisfactory teaching and a very small proportion is good, too much teaching is inadequate. Teachers spend too long introducing lessons while pupils sit quietly and very little new learning occurs. Although teachers are beginning to give pupils the opportunity to talk to each other about their work, this practice is inconsistent. The length of time pupils have to discuss their work is often too brief and therefore does not make a significant contribution to learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond well when activities are challenging; however, these opportunities are too few. In the better lessons, pupils are encouraged to solve problems and work independently. When support staff are well deployed they make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils' work is marked regularly but teacher assessments are often inaccurate and fail to identify where pupils' progress has stalled and, in too many cases, regressed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Teachers and support staff work hard to make sure lessons are accessible to the high number of pupils whose first language is not English. However, there are too many occasions when pupils do not make the expected progress because the work is not suitably adapted to meet the range of learners' needs. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics, where evidence in books shows pupils of different abilities completing similar tasks. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is variable with some effective practice during targeted group work. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and it is now good. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. The school places great emphasis on enrichment activities and visits. These capture pupils' imaginations and provide a sound foundation for improving their language skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good relationships and a caring ethos ensure that there is good pastoral care and support. Staff take additional training to meet the needs of pupils with medical conditions. As a result, the needs of these pupils are well met and they are well cared for. Pupils say they feel safe in school because teachers and other adults look after them well. Parents support this view. Pupils feel that adults will deal effectively with any problems they have. There is very little bullying and, when it does occur, it is dealt with very effectively. Child protection procedures, vetting of staff and risk assessments are well established, ensuring pupils are as safe as they can be. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory rather than good because academic guidance is inconsistent for all pupils. Owing to inaccuracies in assessment, pupils' targets are too easy or too difficult. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Although the headteacher and staff have worked hard to secure a high level of care for pupils, they have placed insufficient emphasis upon pupils' academic progress and the standards they reach. The headteacher and deputy headteachers do not rigorously monitor or evaluate the work of the high proportion of staff with management or year group responsibilities. As a result, the work of these staff is inconsistent and does not make a sufficiently positive impact on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. The two deputy headteachers have recently gained a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weakness. They have some useful ideas for improving the work of the school, but have not had the opportunity to put these into practice. Governors are keen and supportive and fulfil their duties satisfactorily. They have done much to gain additional funding for the school and improve resources. For instance, they secured funding to purchase laptops for all pupils in Years 3 and 4. Although school leaders have not provided them with sufficient information, governors are increasingly challenging the school in their role as a critical friend. They are fully aware that the pupils need to make better progress.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Conway Primary School, Birmingham, B11 INS

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team and me into your school and for sharing your work with us. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and listening to some of you sing in assembly. We would also like to thank the members of the school council who told us about their work.

You are polite and well mannered towards each other and the adults that work with you. Many of you told us that you like visiting different places and learning about different countries and religions. You told us that the adults in school help to keep you safe and take good care of you. They also give you the chance to help others by encouraging you to raise money for lots of different charities.

However, we do not think your school is doing as well as it should be in helping you to achieve your very best. There is a lot to do to make your school as good as it should be. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make sure that you do as well as you can in reading, writing and mathematics. We did see some good teaching where you were given the chance to talk to each other about your work and you learnt many new things. We have asked all the teachers to try to teach like this. Finally, we have asked the school to make sure that everyone is helping you to make better progress.

We are sure that you will do all you can to help all the adults that work with you make your school better by working as hard as you can. Other inspectors will visit your school regularly to check its progress.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Usha Devi Her Majesty's Inspector